Innovation in English Language Teacher Education

Edited by George Pickering
and Professor Paul Gunashekar

Selected papers from the fourth
International Teacher Educator Conference
Hyderabad, India

21–23 February 2014

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THEME TWO: Learning from experience

Foreword

Michael Connolly, Assistant Director English Partnerships, British Council India

The theme of the 2014 edition of the Teacher Educators Conference was 'Innovation in English Language Teacher Education'. In the field of English language teacher education, any innovation has to be practical. It has to meet the needs of the teacher educators it is aimed at, but more importantly it must develop skills and knowledge which will improve the quality of teaching in the classroom and ultimately impact on learner outcomes. Innovation can be revolutionary and abrupt, but more often it is part of an evolutionary process: small, forward-thinking changes that cumulatively have a big effect.

Though I have worked for the British Council for over 13 years, and in countries as varied as Jordan, Japan and Spain, I often tell colleagues that I had two distinct careers: one before I arrived in India and the other one which started the moment I landed in Delhi. When I arrived in India in 2011 I was thrown into the deep end, developing the concept of what would become the Bihar Language Initiative for Secondary Schools (BLISS) – a teacher education project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DfID). This has grown to be one of our most high-profile projects, thanks to the work of local colleagues and the support we receive from the Bihar state government and DfID. Working on BLISS, I have not only experienced the real India first hand, with all its excitement, diversity and challenges, but also saw from close quarters both revolutionary and evolutionary innovation at play.

At the start of the project, fewer than 5% of our teacher educators had email addresses. Very few had access to the Internet, mediated by clunky desktops, expensive laptops and landline-based modems in a region with variable power supply.

Within a short few years, our team witnessed almost every teacher educator going online thanks to the sweeping changes brought in by the smartphone revolution in India. Teacher educators – and much of Bihar's population as a whole – leapfrogged intermediate technologies and started speeding along the information highway on their handheld devices.

This change allowed us to make a number of innovative changes to the way that we communicated with the teacher educators. We started communicating key project information by text message and began a Facebook group, bringing the geographically dispersed team together in an online community. Knowledge and information sharing became much easier. Technology also enabled us to assess and evaluate the impact of our training more effectively as teacher educators shared their experiences more quickly and we experimented with using technology to collect monitoring and evaluation data.

But innovation is not always centred around technology. As a teacher and teacher educator, I firmly believe that every lesson and every training session has the potential to be innovative as each lesson or session is unique. Each lesson builds on previous knowledge and introduces something new. Many of the papers presented at the 2014 Teacher Educator Conference were focused on sharing experiences and delegates and speakers alike debated the merit of different approaches and collected ideas to fuel their own innovative practices.

At the same time, it's important to recognise that innovation cannot be thrust upon unwilling participants. Often, there is good reason for participants to resist top-down initiatives, however innovative their proponents believe them to be. This is particularly so in education. Participatory events such as this year's conference can go some way towards ensuring a feeling of ownership as the participants construct their own knowledge and understanding of innovation as a concept, and the potential for innovating within their own sphere of work.

One obvious measure of the relevance of the theme of a conference is the participation of the target audience during the event. By that reckoning, our 2014 conference was an unqualified success with over 110 speakers delivering sessions attended by 1,200 delegates from 27 countries. Our webcast sessions reached a further 3,012 viewers from 104 countries across the globe.

The choice of the conference theme and the decisions around the relevant sub-themes were made along with our colleagues at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, without whom not only this but previous editions of the Teacher Educator Conference would not have been possible.

We have published select presentations from all three previous Teacher Educator Conferences. However, this publication is not merely one more in a series, but part of the British Council's ongoing and expanding work in English language policy, research and publications, a critical area of our activity in India and worldwide. Through this stream of our work, we work with local and international partners with the aim of providing an evidence base for interventions and innovations that work in language teaching and teacher education.

All our publications, including this one, are freely available for download from our website www.britishcouncil.in/teach/resources/publications-research

I would love to hear from you and your colleagues about this volume and our other publications.

Introduction

Paul Gunashekar, Professor, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

> *Innovations can cover a very broad range of areas – some of which may include methods for systematic assessment of student learning, improved teacher training, innovative pedagogies in the classroom including those that leverage technology in the classroom, supplemental instruction for first-generation learners, methods for improving teacher motivation and effectiveness, and methods for leveraging resources from third parties for improving education* (Twelfth Five Year Plan Vol 3: 65).

I am delighted to be associated with the publication of a select clutch of papers presented at the Teacher Educator Conference 2014 (TEC14), co-hosted by the British Council and my university, EFLU. The theme of the conference – *Innovation in English Language Teacher Education* – was an excellent choice because it has been an essential attribute in the profile of both institutions and in teacher education enterprises across the country.

The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) in India posits: 'Any system, in order to be forward looking, must be bold in encouraging experimentation and innovation and also be involved with [a] constant review of the outcomes of such efforts. The field of teacher education should be no exception' (p. 83). By choosing *innovation* as its central focus, TEC14 hoped to provide a forum for teacher educators and teachers of English to showcase their innovative practices in the training classroom and the language classroom respectively. Given the extraordinary diversity of teaching contexts in India, the practices and experiences that were highlighted at the conference would have equipped the delegates with skills and strategies to deploy creatively in solving common classroom problems that they as practitioners regularly confront.

English in India represents a wide range of use and ownership: from a foreign language through to a second language and a first language. Consequently, the contexts in which English is taught reflect this range and diversity, and have implications for the teacher's linguistic proficiency and professional competence. In this regard, the National Focus Group on the Teaching of English Position Paper (2006) envisions the route teacher education should take: 'Teacher education needs to be ongoing and onsite as well as preparatory. Emphasis must be laid on teacher proficiency in or familiarity with the language, as the teacher is often a role model […] Proficiency and professional awareness are equally to be promoted, the latter to be imparted where necessary through the teachers' own languages' (p. 14). The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) elaborates this national vision of teacher education by foregrounding five principles that should inform the enterprise: the integrative and eclectic nature of teacher education; its liberal, humanistic and non-didactic underpinnings; its

multicultural and context-sensitive facets; the necessity for it to be transacted in a diversity of learning spaces and curriculum sites apart from the classroom; and, most importantly, reflective practice to be its chief aim. 'Pedagogical knowledge has to constantly undergo adaptation to meet the needs of diverse contexts through critical reflection by the teacher on his/her practices' (pp. 19-20). TEC14 was therefore a suitable occasion for the delineation of the five principles.

EFLU

Of the 39 central universities in India, EFLU is unique in its conception and function: a university that has over two hundred faculty members across three campuses, all of whom have specialised in different aspects of language study and language education. From small beginnings 56 years ago as the Central Institute of English, we have now become synonymous with Indian ELT. A key mandate of EFLU is to train language teachers in methods and approaches appropriate to the Indian context, and it has been in the vanguard of teacher education enterprises and research since its founding. This is an opportunity to highlight the more innovative work that the university has been doing in the area of teacher education and language teaching.

EFLU innovative practices

ELTI Support Scheme
The English Language Teaching Institutes Support Scheme (ELTISS), a Government of India sponsored project, was launched in 1985 at the beginning of the seventh Five-Year Plan and has continued since. English Language Teaching Institutes are set up by the state governments; however, central assistance is provided to augment state resources for teacher development at the school level. Currently, there are 15 State Institutes of English and two Regional Institutes of English. EFLU monitors the academic programmes of the 17 ELTIs, and provides academic support to them in the form of syllabus design, materials development and train-the-trainer courses.

District Centre Scheme
Begun in 1985, the District Centre Scheme (DCS) is a UGC-sponsored programme that aims to impart saturation-level training to teachers of English in secondary schools so that a qualitative improvement can be made in the teaching of English across the country. At present there are 14 centrally-funded and 15 state-run District Centres spread across the country. These centres are staffed by resource persons who have received specialized training at EFLU.

CELT in Sri Lanka
In 2009 India and Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the Sri Lanka-India Centre for English Language Training (SLICELT). Under the MoU, the Government of India appointed EFLU as the technical consultant for the project and funded the deputation of two experts from EFLU to SLICELT for a period of two years. In addition, a Digital Language Laboratory was set up in Sri Lanka with the assistance of the Government of India.

CELTs in other countries
EFLU has been identified as the nodal agency for setting up permanent centres for English language training abroad. As part of this initiative, CELTs have been established in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam with the objective of equipping teachers of English, students, civil servants, professionals and businesspersons in these countries with adequate English language and communication skills. Two experts were deputed from the university to each of these centres for two years to launch turnkey projects.

International Training Programme
In the last decade the university has developed into a renowned training centre for foreign professionals seeking to improve their proficiency in English. It has set up an International Training Programme (ITP), which offers the course *Progress to Proficiency* three times a year. ITP receives its impetus from ITEC/SCAAP scholarships offered by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, to developing countries in Africa, South Asia, South-East Asia, Central Asia and South America.

Teacher education programmes
For the last three decades, EFLU has regularly organized teacher education programmes for teachers of English in schools affiliated to national and state organizations: the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangatan, the Navodaya Vidyalaya Sangatan, the Andhra Pradesh Residential Schools Society, the Andhra Pradesh Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society, and the Andhra Pradesh Tribal Welfare Residential Schools Society. The university has signed an MoU with the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangatan to train a large number of teachers of English and develop teaching and training materials.

EFLU-British Council partnership

I cannot overestimate the immense potential for an abiding partnership between the British Council and an institution that has a stake in languages and language education. Of immediate relevance is TEC14 as well as the Directory of ELT Research in India – both outcomes of the close ties between the two organizations. Research into English language teaching is visibly on the increase in India. However, there has been little attempt to compile information about and ascertain the value of the research that is being undertaken. It is therefore gratifying that the two organizations and the University of Warwick have initiated a partnership to engage in a survey of ELT research in India from 2005 to date. An EFLU team has compiled a directory of ELT research that was carried out at the university itself between 2005 and 2013. This initiative is a step towards the larger survey planned and is the first tangible output of the collaborative project.

In this regard, I am underlining the prospective opportunity for even closer collaboration with the British Council on the basis of two factors. Firstly, the rich source of ELT research in India as demonstrated by EFLU's contribution. And secondly, the findings of the British Council's timely online study titled *ELT*

Partnerships in India that was conducted recently. If our endeavour to establish sustainable collaboration does succeed, the results will be most rewarding. As the British Council online study has established, the impact on the ELT practitioner would manifest itself in terms of academic and professional development while the impact on the institution would be demonstrated in terms of capacity building, professional networking, and increased understanding of different cultures.

The initial funding for the Central Institute of English came from the Ford Foundation, and, notably, faculty support from the British Council in the form of Bruton, Barron and George – the big three of British ELT at the time. We are therefore delighted that 56 years later the relationship between the university and the British Council continues to flourish. The landmark TEC14 conference and this ensuing publication are a celebration of the many successes in teacher education that we have enjoyed, and a timely reminder of what remains to be done.

In *Five Minds for the Future* (2008), Howard Gardner indentifies innovation and creativity as central to education. He describes the *disciplined mind* and the *synthesizing mind* before introducing the *creating mind.* He says that in the future anyone who aspires to success will need to master at least one discipline and learn to work steadily over time to improve skill and understanding. The synthesizers will need to be able to obtain information from disparate sources, understand and evaluate that information objectively and put it together in ways that work for themselves and for other persons. Using discipline and synthesis as the base, the *creating mind* 'puts forth new ideas, poses unfamiliar questions, conjures up fresh ways of thinking, and arrives at unexpected answers' (p. 3). Happily, TEC14 brought together a host of creating minds.

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Preface

George Pickering, Education Consultant and Academic Lead Consultant for the TEC14 Conference

This publication is born out of the ongoing shared interest and partnership of the British Council India and the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad in exploring the key role of teacher educators in English language teaching and learning. Previous collaboration, with the support of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) and ELTAI (English Language Teachers' Association of India), has led to three previous conferences and publications related to teacher education issues (2011-2013).

One of the key issues confronting policy makers, academics, teacher educators and teachers is how to plan, implement, evaluate and sustain effectively innovation from the policy to the classroom levels. Nicholls (1983) defines innovation as 'an object or practice perceived as new by an individual or individuals, which seeks to introduce improvements in relation to the desired goals, and that is planned and deliberate'. Despite the passage of time this definition remains valid today. Edge and Mann (2013: 5) point out that a new idea is in itself not an innovation:

> *Innovation demands concentration on process; it demands that we pay as much attention to how we teach or train as to which topics get covered along the way, or the tools that we employ.*

They go on to suggest that whether an activity counts as an innovation depends on where and when that action takes place. An activity can count as an innovation if it is new-in-context, so the introduction of peer observations – an established practice in some contexts – might be considered as an innovation in a situation where it has not taken place previously.

The 2014 Teacher Educator Conference – 'Innovation in English Language Teacher Education', held in Hyderabad from 21 to 23 February 2014, sought to examine the concept and practices of innovation from different perspectives.

The principal themes explored at the conference were:

1. **Innovations in Continuing Professional Development for English language teacher educators and teachers**

- technology and CPD
- social media and networking for CPD
- online and face-to-face mentoring
- teacher motivation through technology

2. Learning from experience

- reflection as a tool for growth
- classroom-based research
- alternative practices in assessment and evaluation
- feedback as a teaching-learning tool

3. Technological resources for language education

- m-learning in teacher education
- online teacher education
- interface of technological and traditional resources
- digital course design and delivery
- technology for inclusive and special education
- technology enabled in-service teacher training (INSETT).

The challenges confronting educators in effecting innovations is well documented (Waters 2009; Wedell 2009). Rather than focusing on learning lessons from the sometimes catatastrophic, sometimes heroic past failures of innovation in education, the conference sought to highlight the examples of successful good practices and effective implementations that might have applications and implications for innovation attempts elsewhere. The conference was an opportunity for leading academics, teachers, students, managers, teacher educators, researchers and policy makers to discuss and debate their perspectives and experiences on innovation through a variety of conference forums, including a keynote address, plenaries, featured talks, panel discussions, a debate, presentations, workshops, poster presentations and informal networking. Many of the conference sessions were web broadcast to a wider audience who could contribute to conference discussions through tweets and Facebook posts.

The collection of papers in this publication reflects the diverse backgrounds, contexts and perspectives assembled at the conference. One of the most notable features of many of the papers is that they are based on bottom-up, grass roots research conducted by practitioners in their own classroom contexts. As Waters (2014) has pointed out, this kind of research is often not captured in the formal innovations literature. In many cases practitioners, whose research is reported in this publication, experimented with a new methodology or technology using an action research methodology and recorded the results of their interventions for the benefit of themselves, their students and other stakeholders.

Fullan (2007) and others have viewed innovating as comprising three broad phases:

1. initiation (deciding to go ahead with an innovation),
2. implementation (attempting to put the innovation into practice), and
3. institutionalisation (seeking to achieve sustainability).

Most of the papers in these proceedings fall into the first two categories.

The contributions to this publication have been classified into four parts:

The **Overview** section presents the plenary talks which address themes that cover more than one sub-theme of the conference including teacher research, CPD practice and research in India and elsewhere and innovations in pre-service INSETT. **Simon Borg's** paper, based on his keynote plenary talk at the conference, examines teacher research as a strategy for professional development which teachers can apply in their working contexts. The key questions he seeks to address are:

1. What is teacher research?
2. What does doing teacher research involve?
3. Why is teacher research a valuable activity for English language teachers?

Rama Mathew examines the extent to which education policies support teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). She reviews some models of teacher development that are in use in and outside India. She then revisits some of the CPD work she has personally been involved in. Her examples help to indicate what kind of CPD work is meaningful to teachers and what is sustainable. She believes that an approach that creates opportunities for reflection and theorising from practice, while continuing to learn about language teaching/learning and about teacher development, is satisfying and sustaining.

Julian Edge and **Steve Mann** reflect on how successful innovations have been in ELT in their paper entitled 'Innovation in the provision of pre-service education and training for English language teachers: issues and concerns'. They explore the meaning of the notion of innovation and discuss some of the themes of their recent book on pre-service innovations. The authors also invite us to reflect on our role as teacher educators and whether or not we are reviewing our own practice and location in a world of hegemony.

Theme one discusses various aspects of innovations in CPD for teacher educators and teachers.

Andy Keedwell and **Sayed Najeem** review the introduction of self-access systems in two contexts, Ethiopia and Afghanistan, where self-access and autonomy remain unfamiliar concepts. They propose ways in which the potential obstacles to effective implementation can be mitigated through systematic CPD and examine in depth the rationale, design and impact of a CPD programme designed to support all involved with self-access systems.

Arindam Sengupta reports on a project he conducted in a government Bengali-medium school in Kolkata. Language learning content was generated by encouraging a group of young ESL learners to write in an online students' magazine. His findings indicate that, by engaging with the collaborative writing task, the learners generated content through a relevant lexical search and

writing coherent paragraphs to describe and/or interpret the artworks. **Santosh Mahapatra** outlines a case study of an online teacher development programme that focused on familiarising a group of ESL teachers located in diverse contexts with Web 2.0 tools for language teaching purposes. One of the most important pedagogical implications of the study is that Web 2.0-enabled online teacher education holds great potential in ESL contexts like India, but that it should be conducted carefully and in consultation with teachers.

Shefali Kulkarni and **Allwyn D'Costa** outline an innovation in continuing professional development for British Council training consultants working on the Karnataka English Language Teacher Education Project (KELTEP) and review its impact on their development. The paper aims to motivate both individual practitioners as well as heads of institutions to think of collaborative and individual tasks for the development of training consultants. **Farhan Azim** and **Mir Md. Saifur Rahman** report on their research into the suitability of self-study materials used by teachers in a CPD programme for primary school teachers involved in the English in Action educational programme implemented in Dhaka, Bangladesh. **Ravinarayan Chakrakodi** discusses teacher motivation through the use of a video film that was prepared on a particular text used in the Grade VIII English textbook being used in government schools in Karnataka. The impact of the video on the teaching-learning processes in the classroom was analysed and presented in the paper.

Theme two explores learning from experience including reflection as a tool for growth, classroom-based research, alternative practices in assessment and evaluation and feedback as a teaching and learning tool.

Padmini Boruah reviews the SOAP procedure (Subjective/Objective/Analysis/Planning) as an effective model for critical reflection that makes practitioners analyse their experience by revisiting it critically and referring it to research in the field before planning the next step in their development. She argues that critical reflection helps professionals question their pedagogical practices through objective procedures, thus leading to healthier classroom interaction and continuous professional development. **K. Padmini Shankar** reviews the role of tasks in triggering reflection in pre-service teachers. Four tasks related to critical moments in the classroom are used to encourage trainees to reflect on the actions that they would take. Her findings indicate that tasks related to critical classroom moments have the potential to trigger reflection and prepare pre-service teachers to face challenges in their future careers.

Lina Mukhopadhyay's contribution explores the use of evaluation criteria as a scaffolding device to help adult ESL learners plan their writing performance. Her findings indicate that if teachers design, share, and train learners to use evaluation criteria to plan their performance, then learners will be more likely to experience academic benefits. **Mohialdeen Alotumi** investigates Yemeni EFL students' perceptions, attitudes and challenges on integrating Facebook Interaction (FBI) to improve their essay writing. The teacher researcher conducted their study to

uncover what would allow students to improve their writing skills in a Yemeni EFL context.

Elaine Boyd's reflective paper is designed to help teachers identify and write good tests. The paper describes the importance of validity, reliability and impact and considers their relationship to ethical practice and how this impacts on the teacher's responsibility to their students.

Kuheli Mukherjee reviews a recently revised curriculum for the Diploma in Elementary Teacher Education in West Bengal designed to improve the quality of English teaching. The researcher investigates the current reality of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) at the elementary level to explore the conditions necessary for successful implementation of the innovations. The paper discusses three areas: content, approach and the evaluation of elementary SLTE, where innovations have been proposed.

Pranjana Kalita Nath's paper focuses on promoting reflective skills among trainee teachers for their professional growth in distance ELT teacher education programmes. It is an attempt to analyse how activities in print materials in such programmes can be designed effectively to stimulate reflection, as these are still the dominant medium of instruction in distance ELT programmes in India. The paper offers some suggestions on how teacher support can be built into distance-learning print materials to encourage trainees to reflect.

Sruti Akula argues that explicit strategy training can be used to develop the higher-order academic reading skills of adult learners. She reports on research in which college students were asked to read a range of texts and guided to match strategies with reading purposes. The learners used a variety of strategies such as predicting, re-reading, underlining and listing key ideas to comprehend texts at both factual and inferential levels. **Susmita Pani** also refers to the reading problems that many students have at the university level, as they have very limited experience of engaging with texts directly. The paper presents a study that was conducted in Odisha using reciprocal teaching as a classroom procedure. The scaffolding inherent in the procedure and later the clear role distribution involved in reciprocal teaching ensured learner participation and appeared to make this procedure effective.

Shree Deepa points out that tasks used in the language classroom normally have visual inputs and that such tasks exclude blind/visually impaired students as they do not perceive them fully. An attempt is made in this paper to explore the possibilities of changing tasks so that the goal of inclusiveness is realised. The study has implications for minimising the exclusion of blind/visually impaired students and facilitating their participation in the tasks with modes that are meaningful and useful.

Alice Udosen and **Wisdom Jude's** study, conducted in the Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria, sought to explore English language teacher educators' knowledge of

feedback, and the type and quality of feedback they utilised with their teacher trainees. The results of the study indicated that teacher educators' perceptions of what constitutes feedback were different from those of their trainees. The researchers recommend that teacher educators be exposed through workshops to understanding what constitutes feedback and how they can implement it as an innovation to achieve the aims of teacher education. **Joy Townsend** explores the use and effectiveness of observation and feedback in the context of TE:ST (Total Evaluation:School Transformation), an evaluation service conducted in a school. The TE:ST process involved an initial evaluation of the school, including observations of teachers with feedback, interviews, questionnaires and evaluation of documents. A subsequent report with recommendations was then fed into the formulation of a school development plan.

In his paper **Sanjay Arora** proposes ways of defossilising the errors of ESL learners coming from rural backgrounds in Rajasthan through using a variety of classroom strategies. The concluding part of the paper reviews some strategies that may work in other situations beyond the one mentioned above.

Adam Scott's paper outlines the findings and practical applications of his action research project with ESL beginners in a language school in Brighton, UK. The research investigated the effectiveness of teaching corpus-driven content delivered using a lexical teaching approach and found that this resulted in faster language acquisition and more successful interaction, enabling learners to make quicker progress to elementary level and beyond.

Geetika Saluja presents a study carried out to implement the principles of co-operative learning (CL) structures in the curriculum transaction of Science in grade VIII students and to study its effect on achievement in Science as well as any changes in communication and interpersonal skills. The results indicated that students who studied by the CL method had a higher level of achievement than students in the control group.

Theme three covers various aspects of technological resources for language education.

Dawn Bikowski's paper outlines a framework that guides educators in using technologies in ways that meet students' communicative competence and digital literacy needs. Resources and guidelines for integrating them into the classroom effectively are discussed and the framework she offers consists of ten guiding principles, which she outlines in the paper. **Nicky Hockly's** paper on digital literacies reviews the theory underpinning them, explores how teacher training courses can address them, and considers the challenges involved in operationalising digital literacies in the low-resource classroom. Hockly argues, among other things, that institutions would be well advised to allocate 80% of their budgets to teacher training and development and 20% of their budgets to technology.

Meera Srinivas investigates whether the participants of e-teacher courses consider their experience of participating in group tasks to be collaborative. Based on the author's own experience of participating in a course, and the perceptions of e-teachers obtained through a survey questionnaire, the paper argues that, while there are a few factors that promote positive interaction in the discussion board tasks, certain factors impede effective collaboration and learning in small group projects. The paper discusses these factors and the implications for the design and implementation of collaborative tasks in online teacher education courses. **Bose Vasudevan** posits that video recordings of the micro teaching of ELT teacher trainees can help them reflect on their own teaching. The paper, which was based on research conducted with a group of ELT teacher trainees at the Institute of Language Teaching, Jamnagar, presents the possibilities of using video recordings of sequences of teaching language as tools for reflection to assist trainees to become insightful and realistic about their own teaching.

Priyank Varma and **Madhavi Gayathri Raman** explore the possibility of making print materials, specifically the language textbook, more accessible to visually impaired learners who attend mainstream classes. Three lessons from the English textbook used by schools affiliated to the Andhra Pradesh State Board syllabus were presented in an audio format to eleven visually impaired learners from nine schools. Their analysis indicates that the target group performed better when provided with the necessary support using advancements in the print media and audio technology. **Ramraj M's** paper highlights that whilst reading is a complex and cognitively demanding process that requires chunking, visually impaired learners have to read a text word by word whether read out by a scribe or with the use of technology. The researcher compares the differences in the performance of sighted and visually impaired students using three parallel reading comprehension texts, read out by scribes and by technology, with and without numbering and indication of answer location.

Raashid Nehal documents a pilot study project funded by the Regional English Language Office (RELO), American Centre, New Delhi and facilitated by the Academic Staff College of the Aligarh Muslim University as part of the Kindle Mobile learning initiative in India. The paper is based on the use of Kindle technology by 337 young learners enrolled in four English Access Microscholarship programmes at Aligarh, Bhubaneswar, Kochi (Aluva) and Kolkata. **Akhil Jha** reports on research into developing the the writing skills of first year engineering students at the Indian Institute of Technology, Indore. Through 'peer group writing', students with better writing skills provided a scaffold for learners who did not have appropriate writing skills. Secondly, technology was used to enable peers and the teacher to provide opportunities for whole class feedback and revision.

It is hoped that this publication will feed into the current and growing literature on innovation in English language teaching and teacher education in diverse contexts (Edge & Mann 2013; Hayes 2014). Waters (2014) has recently argued for the research agenda on innovations to include:

1. investigations concerning the further application of established theoretical frameworks;

2. others involving concepts from innovation theory which have not yet been applied to English language education (ELE); and

3. research into under-researched aspects of ELE innovations.

We very much hope that this publication stimulates others to become more involved in this agenda.

The editors would like to express their sincere thanks to the contributors to this publication for conducting their innovations and for communicating them so eloquently to others. We are very grateful that so many of the authors have agreed to provide their email addresses so that individuals can follow up specific points with them.

We hope that readers will find that the range of practices and perspectives encompassed in this publication will encourage them:

- to reflect on their own experiences of innovation
- to carry out their own research and
- to identify 'bright spots', examples of best practices, often carried out in challenging contexts (Heath and Heath 2011).

The British Council and the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad welcome your responses to this publication and to the ongoing development of research, planning, implementation and the institutionalisation of innovation in English language teaching and English language teacher education.

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Overview: Innovation in English language teacher education

Teacher research for professional development

Simon Borg, ELT Consultant

Abstract

Conventional notions of teacher development are based on training models which very often take teachers away from the classroom. This paper examines teacher research as a strategy for professional development which teachers can apply in their working contexts. Key questions I address are:

1. *What is teacher research?*
2. *What does doing teacher research involve?*
3. *Why is teacher research a valuable activity for English language teachers?*

My aim here is to demonstrate that teacher research is a feasible and valuable professional development strategy that English language teachers can engage in and which can contribute to improvements in the quality of the educational experience they provide for their learners.

Introduction

Teachers spend the bulk of their time in the classroom, yet professional development typically involves activities that occur *away* from the classroom, such as workshops, lectures, courses and conferences. There is of course value in all such activities; however, exclusive reliance on external opportunities for professional development has several drawbacks, summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: External teacher development

Infrequent	Teachers cannot attend external events on a regular basis
Costly	Teachers or their schools must pay to attend
Disruptive	Teachers are taken out of school and lessons must be rearranged
Generic	External training may not address individual teacher needs
Decontextualized	Learning is not situated in teachers' classrooms
Receptive	Teachers receive knowledge from more 'expert' trainers
Not 'owned'	Teachers have minimal say in decisions about the training

Teacher research provides an alternative to external training and in the rest of this paper I will explain what it is and what doing it involves.

Teacher research

Teachers often react negatively to the suggestion that they can use teacher research to support their professional development. These reactions are caused

by misconceptions of what *research* is and Figure 1 shows six common ideas about research that teachers often have. Research very often does have one or more of these characteristics; however, none of them are defining features of research. For example, although teachers often see research as an activity that is academic (i.e. done to obtain a degree or by someone working in academia), research can also be done by teachers to support their professional development. And, to take two further examples, while research may be large-scale and statistical, it can also be small-scale and qualitative. In introducing teacher research, then, it is important to ensure that *research* is not being conceived of by teachers in ways which make it appear to be an unfeasible and irrelevant activity. Research should not be defined with reference to its scale, its methodology or the status of the researcher; rather, I find it useful to see it more generally as planned, systematic, purposeful, empirical inquiry which is made public. This definition of research is an appropriate way into a more specific definition of teacher research, which can be distinguished from other forms of research in three particular ways:

1. It is done by teachers – i.e. teachers are the researchers.
2. It takes place in teachers' working contexts – the site for teacher research is the school or classroom.
3. Its purpose is to enhance teachers' work – teacher research allows teachers to understand themselves, their teaching and their students; such understandings can also contribute to the growth of the organization teachers work in.

Figure 1: Six misconceptions about the defining features of research
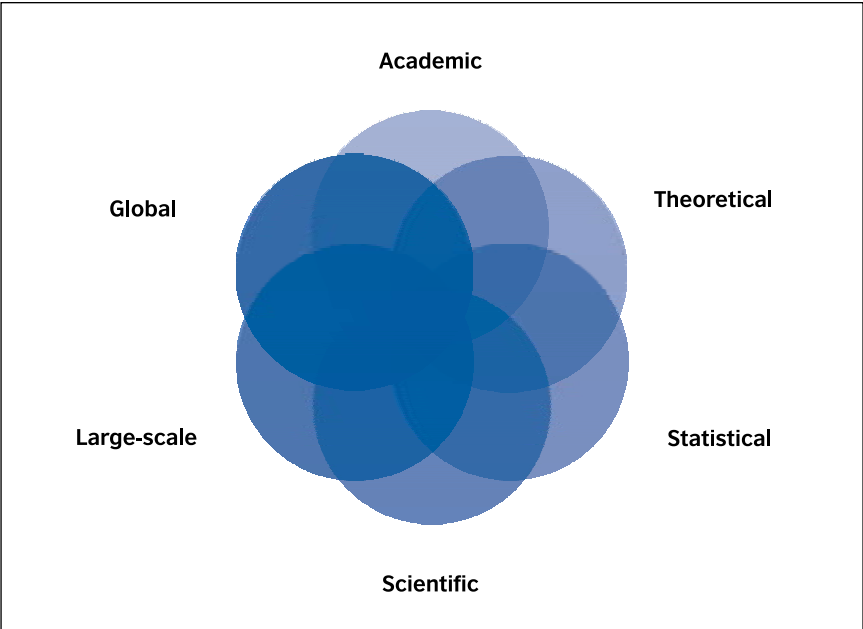
It is important to stress that teacher research is not simply research done by teachers; a teacher doing research for their MA degree who studies other teachers (e.g. through a questionnaire) is not doing teacher research because the focus is not on themselves; similarly, not all research done in the classroom is teacher research – e.g. an academic who visits a school to collect classroom data is not investigating their own teaching but studying others in the way that research conventionally does – this is not teacher research.

Doing teacher research

The process of teacher research is typically visualized as a cycle of some kind (this is especially true in the case of action research, which is one particular type of teacher research). Figure 2 highlights key elements in the teacher research process.

Figure 2: Components in teacher research
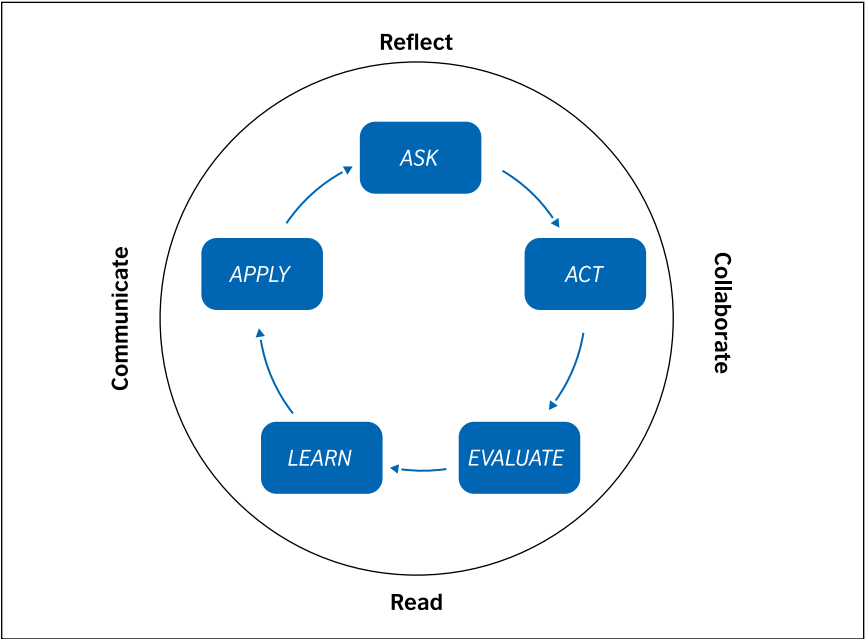
The starting point for teacher research is a question of some kind – an issue that the teacher wants to learn more about or understand better. Although this initial question is often driven by a problem, teacher research is not simply a strategy for solving problems. For example, teachers may want to develop a better understanding of something that works well. The questions that drive teacher research will also be very practical, stemming from teachers' experiences in the classrooms. How can I integrate pair work activities into my lectures? What kind of feedback on writing do my students prefer? How do my learners react to the use of self-assessment? These are examples of questions teachers have investigated using teacher research (see http://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2014/02/teacher-

research-practical-relevant-classroom-inquiry/ for more examples of the kinds of questions teacher research can explore).

Returning to Figure 2, once teachers have a question the next step is to act – to collect some information (or data) relevant to it. This is a central part of the process – teacher research is empirical (i.e. it relies on the collection and analysis of data). The information that is collected needs to be analysed and evaluated, and teachers then use the insights emerging from these processes to make pedagogical decisions. The cyclical nature of the diagram implies that the process is an ongoing one; this does not mean that teachers will be doing teacher research all the time, but more generally the idea is that it is not a linear process through which definitive solutions or answers will be discovered after one cycle of inquiry.

Figure 2 also highlights four additional processes which can enhance teacher research:

- reflection, because teacher researchers are by definition being systematically thoughtful about their work in an ongoing manner;
- reading, because it can be useful to know about what others have already written about the issues teachers are interested in (there is no suggestion here, though, that teacher research should involve the kind of reading that would be required for an academic degree);
- communicating, because by talking to colleagues about their inquiries teachers can receive useful feedback and advice and also motivate others to engage in inquiries of their own;
- and finally, collaborating, because teacher research will be enhanced when teachers work together on a shared project rather than alone.

As noted above, teachers need to collect data to help them examine the questions they are pursuing. Various strategies for data collection are available to teachers – e.g. journal writing, surveys, drawings and photos, video, observation, interviews, class discussions, student work, and lesson plans. One key consideration which should influence which options teachers employ is feasibility – teacher research must be feasible, as it is an activity which teachers do as part of their normal teaching duties; data collection, then, should be integrated as far as possible into teachers' regular work (as opposed to creating large amounts of extra work for them).

The further reading listed at the end of this paper includes many examples of published teacher research projects.

Benefits of teacher research

Numerous benefits of teacher research have been identified in the literature. For example, teachers engaged in teacher research have said they feel more confident, motivated and autonomous; they also feel they are more knowledgeable and have a better understanding of their students. Where teacher research is collaborative, teachers have also reported improvements in their relationships with colleagues. Teacher research allows teachers to be more optimistic; as one

teacher I worked with said, "I look upon problems as challenges to be overcome through research not hurdles to cry about". Renewed enthusiasm is another benefit that teachers derive from teacher research, as illustrated in this comment: "We have been teaching the same way we taught ten years ago but now we have an urge to experiment with new ideas in our teaching".

It is clear then that teacher research offers many potential benefits to teachers; their students also benefit from more informed pedagogical decisions while organizations can benefit too where a culture of teacher research exists across a school. As evidence of these many benefits grows, teacher research is becoming increasingly visible as a professional development strategy for teachers. For example, Cambridge English and English Australia run a teacher research scheme for ELT professionals in Australia; Cambridge English and English UK run a similar scheme for teachers of English in the UK; while Cambridge University Press has also recently launched its own teacher research scheme. The British Council is also supporting teacher research, as for example in the project I facilitated with teachers of English in Pakistan in 2012-13 and which resulted in a publication containing the reports of teachers' work (see further reading below).

Conclusion

I started this paper by arguing that exclusive reliance on external forms of professional development has several drawbacks. In contrast, teacher research provides an option which allows professional development to be ongoing, inexpensive, integrated into teachers' routine work, personalized and practical. Teacher research also gives teachers a strong sense of ownership in shaping the direction their professional development takes. I am not of course suggesting that teacher research is the right or only option for all teachers – teachers in different contexts and at different stages of their career will benefit in varying ways from different approaches to professional development; however, where the conditions are appropriate and teachers have suitable skills, knowledge and dispositions, teacher research has significant transformative potential.

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Visit http://simon-borg.co.uk/free-sources-of-language-teaching-research/ for a list of free sources of language teaching research, including several volumes of teacher research.

Teacher development as the future of teacher education

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Abstract

Available evidence about teachers' professional development generally paints a rather gloomy picture, especially in India. While some pockets can be identified where good teacher development practices are in operation, reports from schools and school boards indicate a contrary view: hardly any provision for teacher development, either in terms of time given to the teacher for his/her own development or any acknowledgement of how some teachers are making efforts to develop on their own.

In this paper, I would like to first examine whether and to what extent education policies provide for teachers' continuing professional development vis-à-vis its actual realisation in school contexts. Then I would like to look at some models of teacher development that are in use outside India. With this as the backdrop, I would like to revisit some of the CPD work I have been involved in to understand the nuances of this construct. The examples I discuss indicate what kind of CPD work is meaningful to teachers and more importantly what is sustainable. I would like to suggest that an approach that creates opportunities for reflection and theorising from practice while continuing to learn about language teaching/learning and about teacher development is satisfying and sustaining.

Teacher Training (TT), Teacher Education (TE) and Teacher Development (TD)

It is necessary to understand key terms such as TT, TE and TD before we go on to discuss Teacher Development. *Training,* according to Widdowson (1983) and Richards and Nunan (1990), deals with familiarising student teachers with techniques and skills to apply in the classroom whereas *education* involves teachers in 'developing theories of teaching, understanding the nature of teacher decision making and strategies for self-awareness and self-evaluation...' (Richards and Nunan ibid: xi). TT is one-off, usually short-term and compulsory for getting a job. On the other hand, TD is seen to be a voluntary process, ongoing, bottom-up, since the starting point is the teachers' own experience where new information is sought, shared, reflected on, tried out, processed in terms of personal experience and finally 'owned' by the teachers (Ur 1997). For the purpose of this paper, TT is an officially mandated programme that may or may not have elements that promote TD. When development is not required on a TT programme, it becomes a goal which a teacher engages in of his/her own volition; and understandably not many teachers will want to take on anything 'extra'. Regardless of low salaries, inadequate resources and lack of incentives, some teachers set up a

developmental agenda and engage in activities because they see personal value in it (see Head and Taylor 1997 for a discussion of this point).

Teacher development: a policy perspective

This section attempts to provide a brief summary and a critique of what various committees and commissions have recommended especially for CPD of teachers. This is done in order to understand the policy perspective that informs school education vis-à-vis CPD in India.

Beginning with the University Education Commission (1948-49) which emphasised the need to supplement experience with experiment, the different advisory bodies have continually stressed the importance of different aspects of in-service teacher education (Secondary Education Commission 1952-53, Education Commission 1964-66, Yashpal Committee 1993, National Commission on Teachers 1983-85, National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2000).

Experts seem to agree that teacher education is a continuous process and that its pre-service and in-service components are inseparable. However, there seems to be some confusion/contradiction in the way TE has been conceptualised: on the one hand, terms such as CPD, sharing of practice, need-based programmes, self-learning and independent thinking, and on the other, notions such as *training*, *reorientation of teachers*, *equipping* which implies a skill-based approach, are interchangeably used. The more recent policy frameworks, e.g. the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and the National Knowledge Commission (2006-2009) see CPD as the most important measure to bridge the gap between pre-service and in-service TE. The Commission also recommends peer feedback, especially in rural areas, as a support system for TD.

The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), a statutory body of the Government of India, has made specific recommendations about in-service TE (1998, 2009). One of the aims of CPD programmes according to the 2009 document is for teachers to 'break out of intellectual isolation and share experiences and insights with others in the field, both teachers and academics ….' (p. 65). For this, the need to create 'spaces for sharing of experiences of communities of teachers' (p. 66) is emphasised.

In sum, the terms training and development have been interchangeably used, as a result of which even short, expert oriented, one-off in-service programmes are seen as TD activities. The earlier recommendations saw a need for CPD but did not articulate its ramifications clearly enough for implementation. The more recent ones seem to spell out more details that render CPD achievable in more concrete terms in school as well as in TEIs (Teacher Education Institutions), but do not have a corresponding provision in school-practice. There are several unanswered questions: How is the space to be created in the teacher's busy schedule for teacher reflection, sharing, mentoring and learning from one another? Who should create it? What is the role of a TEI in CPD? Is there a provision for acknowledging

teacher's own efforts at engaging in CPD activities? Can NCTE, school boards and TEIs work collaboratively to make this policy a reality?

CPD in schools: what do teachers say?

A small questionnaire-based study of some thirty teachers in Delhi, with school-teaching experience of 2 to 20 years, was carried out to find out their perceptions of what their job entailed and of possibilities that exist for their professional development. For a few it was a profession of their choice; for the rest it was by accident or the last option as a career. However, if they were to make a choice now, almost all of them felt that they would choose this profession; one of them, in fact, said, 'I wish I had become a teacher sooner'.

The study revealed that most teachers had settled into the profession even though it may not have been their first choice. They do not like non-academic activities, but derive a lot of satisfaction when students show interest in learning. They would like to be up to date in their subject, but in-service programmes don't seem to help them with this, nor with how to become better teachers; they have to themselves find ways of doing this. Clearly they have not heard of TD and long for a forum and an outlet where they can express and share their experience with each other. Thus, while in policy there is a strong suggestion for creating space for teachers to share experience with peers, from what obtains in schools, it seems clear that except for short, discrete programmes which are mandatory, there is nothing that helps teachers to keep themselves alive or motivated in their busy schedule. Many of them have learnt to 'survive' in their own ways, since there is no system-support for ongoing professional development.

Some success stories around the world

There are quite a few initiatives elsewhere that not only visualise comprehensive models for developing education professionals but also ensure that these models are implemented in actual practice. The TE model for the 21st century (TE[21]) suggested by the National Institute of Education in Singapore comprises various components unified by the overarching purpose of equipping teachers with competencies that will enable them to respond proactively to the responsibilities of the classroom and the school. The TE[21] model takes into account the entire spectrum of TE from the stage of initial teacher preparation through to the continuing journey of teacher professional development (see National Institute of Education 2009 for details).

The Professional Standards for Teachers (2007) designed by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) in the UK is a basic framework within which all teachers should operate from the point of initial qualification.

The five stages identified are:

- Qualified Teacher Status
- Core

- Post Threshold
- Excellent Teacher
- Advanced Skills Teacher

Appropriate self-evaluation, reflection and professional development activity are critical to improving teachers' practice at all career stages. The standards demonstrate clearly the key areas in which a teacher should be able to assess his or her own practice, and receive feedback from colleagues. As their careers progress, teachers are expected to extend the depth and breadth of knowledge, skill and understanding that they demonstrate in meeting the standards appropriate to the role they are fulfilling and the context in which they are working.

Stages in Professional Development conceptualised by the British Council's new CPD framework focus on the level of understanding and ability that teachers have in different areas of their professional practice. These stages are articulated as:

- Awareness
- Understanding
- Engaged
- Integrated.

These are only a few examples that offer a roadmap for teacher development. We do not have in India a roadmap that delineates the different stages of development let alone provides accreditation and acknowledgement to a teacher who traverses the path of development. The next section discusses briefly examples of work done in India and tries to understand what lessons we can learn from them.

Some examples from India
Here I would like to draw on work that I have been part of in the last twenty years to highlight as well as critique some of the key features in in-service TE and CPD projects.

The CBSE-ELT Curriculum Implementation Study (1993-1998)
This aimed to monitor and evaluate how the *Interact in English* books at Grade 9 and 10 levels within a communicative curriculum were used in actual classroom contexts across the country and to provide ongoing support with a view to strengthening the curriculum. This phase involved many teachers in studying their own and colleagues' classrooms in a research-based way and conducted need-based workshops whenever the ongoing feedback indicated it. Teachers took on different roles: i.e. that of researcher, resource person, materials writer, assessor and mentor. This phase, that lasted five years, clearly indicated that an insider-oriented monitoring and evaluation phase supported by 'outside experts' was indeed meaningful to teachers and sustainable. By the end of the project, it was clear that a top-down as well as a bottom-up approach to curriculum renewal is important to bring about change in schools. However, the project had a finite time-line and funds and therefore had to end.

The tracer study
I undertook this to evaluate the project's impact after three years and addressed the following questions:

1. the nature and extent to which the communicative curriculum introduced in 1993 continued to be communicative and learner-centred, taking into account the kind of support available in school;
2. the nature and extent to which the teacher-research approach to ongoing curriculum renewal and professional development had been sustained.

The findings from the tracer study revealed the following: the role of teachers-as-researchers during the monitoring and evaluation phase gave teachers a broader perspective on the curriculum in different contexts. Before the project, they merely taught the 'lesson', did the exercises, and conducted tests and were happy. Now their work did not end with a class. They could observe colleagues' classes in a non-judgemental way and it *'worked wonders'* (in a teacher's own words) with colleagues. Many of these teachers managed these ongoing professional activities in spite of the school's (unwritten) rules and conventions. There were 'silent innovators', albeit very few, who did things that they felt needed to be done, in spite of school constraints. This study underlined the need for building on existing school/Board structures to support the teacher in her ongoing professional development (see Mathew 2006 for details).

Case study (six teachers)
I undertook a case study of six such 'silent innovators' (2003). The study explored the following questions:

- How does the pedagogical understanding of teachers develop and change over time?
- What personal and professional influences impact teachers' pedagogical understanding?
- What kind(s) of inputs are self-sustaining and generative?
- How do teachers build on these inputs to become ongoing learners?

Four important themes that shape teacher development emerged from the case study (see Mathew 2005 for details):

1. Certain personality traits that enable the teacher to see teaching as a vocation
2. A propensity for reflective thinking
3. The need for ongoing professional development activities, and
4. The importance of school support.

Mentoring in Delhi schools (2008–2010)
This project in in-service education aimed to arrive at a model of mentoring and to create a community of teachers who support each other, keep growing and help bridge the gap between teacher education institutions and schools (Mentoring in Delhi Schools 2010).

We supported the teachers by developing a self-instructional handbook on mentoring, giving them a hands-on orientation to how they could observe each other's classes and discuss them, and enabling them to read and discuss some articles/papers in the area. Of the 80 teachers in 11 schools that participated in this CPD project, we found the following:

- About 25-30 managed to do most of the things and saw value in it. There were mainly two kinds: where, because of school managements and leadership, a model of CPD already existed; and where, in spite of a not-so-supportive environment, teachers engaged in the work because they saw meaning in it.
- About 25 of them gave it a try with different degrees of success.
- The rest were non-starters: not volunteers, inadequate school support, not motivated enough.

The project revealed that a framework for CPD was clearly necessary for teachers to first of all take on work beyond their regular schedule and then to continue with it. Self-motivation alone was not sufficient to pursue CPD.

Diary study with teachers
Ten volunteer teachers in Delhi took up a diary study that involved writing diaries, looking at each other's diaries and commenting on them in a non-judgemental but a critical way. This three-month study resulted in the presentation of a paper based on it at TEC12 and a subsequent publication in the British Council's CPD book (Mathew 2013). The diaries indicated that although quite a few of them began at the *descriptive reflection level*, over the three months of diary writing they had reached the *dialogic level*; there were also instances of *critical reflection* (see Hatton and Smith's (1995) stages of reflection in the Appendix).

These teachers wanted to do diary writing and contribute chapters to a book on teachers' voices and professional development. Now we are working on a project involving young learners as researchers (in collaboration with Warwick University) and hope to write a book on our work.

Conclusions

The work during the last twenty years shows that some things about CPD have indeed changed: while the policy on TE appears to have become more sophisticated, schools make heavier demands on teachers' time, thus neutralising the implementation of the policy. For example, the work on CCE (Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation) has increased tremendously reducing the teacher to the status of an assembly-line worker. Clearly school boards and policy makers need to collaboratively arrive at a workable model for CPD. If not, while a few teachers will struggle to stay growing and motivated, the large majority who do not have the will and/or the energy to struggle give up and settle down to a 'normal' routine.

Where do we go from here?

I recommend the following:

- We need to encourage teachers to theorise from their practice and articulate their understanding in their own words and not pursue a theory-first-and-then-practice approach. The school's agenda and TE policy provisions seem to by and large contradict. While good initial TT programmes can well initiate teachers to take on the path of CPD, unless (i) drastic changes are made to the existing TT programmes with corresponding improvement in teacher educators' competence resulting in more learner-centred approaches to TE, and (ii) schools put in place a strong CPD model and make it work, this will remain a distant dream.

- On our part, we need to accord the status to teachers as knowers, as producers of legitimate knowledge, and as capable of constructing and sustaining their own professional development over time.

For this to happen, we need to have a support system in schools which means that they are given time and space to reflect, observe each other's classes, engage in a professional dialogue, read and write about education, share their experience in seminars/workshops and carry out a host of other professional activities. The stages of professional development, as envisioned by Ofsted, NIE's TE[21] or the British Council, will need to chart the pathways for professional development and lay out clear benchmarks to achieve and appropriately reward those teachers who achieve those targets. Such a scheme will alleviate the problem of teachers attending in-service programmes because their Principals asked them to or because they will get a show-cause notice. It will encourage teachers to take charge of their professional growth and will help them to plan and organise their learning in a way they can manage what is meaningful to them. After all, development is a highly personal experience and each of us derives benefit from opportunities that we encounter/create for ourselves in ways that are meaningful to us. And intriguingly, we should have the choice not to develop if we don't wish to; the only question is, what is the proportion of developing and not-developing teachers that a school system can afford? Clearly it is imperative that we put in place a workable model that helps teachers to keep growing. We need to create a workable CPD model that makes teaching a profession of choice.

The following observation provides a befitting endnote to what I have tried to say here:

> In order for change to become self-sustaining, teachers must begin to engage in practices that have built-in support for the changes they have made; otherwise, the changes are likely to erode over time…for change to become generative, teachers must engage in practices that serve as a basis for their continued learning
>
> (Franke, Carpenter, Fennema, Ansell and Behrend 1998: 67).

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Appendix

Stages of Reflection (Hatton and Smith 1995)

- Descriptive, factual writing: Not reflective.
- Descriptive reflection: Reflective, not only a description of events but some attempt to provide reason/justification for events but in a reportive way.
- Dialogic reflection: Demonstrates a 'stepping back' from the events/actions leading to a different level of mulling about, discourse with self and exploring the experience, events and actions using qualities of judgement and possible alternatives for explaining and hypothesising.
- Critical reflection: Demonstrates an awareness that actions and events are not only located in, and explicable by, reference to multiple perspectives but are located in, and influenced by, multiple historical and socio-political contexts.

Innovation in the provision of pre-service education and training for English language teachers: issues and concerns

Julian Edge, University of Manchester, UK
Steve Mann, University of Warwick, UK

Innovation: some issues from Steve

The British Council has invested some serious energy in the last decade in promoting innovation. Taken as a whole, most of these efforts have been worthwhile. Some might think that the ELTON awards (awards for innovation in ELT) are a pale imitation of the Oscars but they are the closest that teachers, publishers and those involved in teacher education will ever get to a red carpet and some kind of recognition! The ELTONs are the only international awards that recognise and celebrate innovation in the field of English language teaching. What is good about the ELTONs is that they promote ideas that are new and above all ideas that are practical and usable. This is the kind of philosophy that Julian and I adopted for our Innovations book (Edge and Mann 2013). We wanted accounts of practice which foregrounded practical steps and procedures. This is also the rationale for other contributions in the Innovations series (British Council 2013).

How successful have innovations been in ELT?

I now want to focus on innovation. The first question to consider is how successful innovations have been in ELT. Obviously in an article of this length we have not time for an exhaustive survey but, although innovation in ELT has grown apace in recent years, much of it has been unsuccessful (see, for example, Waters 2009). Wedell (2009) argues that this is because of a failure to take into account lessons from innovation theory. He is referring to thinking about who will use the innovation, how they will use it and what barriers there might be in successful adoption of an innovation. In simple terms, he is talking about who is likely to be using these innovations and under what conditions. This consideration of innovation and its relation to context is 'situated' and therefore should be concerned with the development of an appropriate methodology (Holliday 1994).

Innovation in PreSETT

At this point in the article, it might be useful to tell you more about the British Council publication we have been involved in. Edge and Mann (2013) includes 14 different articles that feature an innovation in a PreSETT context. Initially there were over 150 proposals (showing a huge level of interest in the project), confirming the British Council view that there were plenty of practitioners who would like to share practice in this area. When we sent guidelines to the authors

we asked for specific detail of the innovation. In other words, we wanted clarity in description of the procedures and process. It was also important that we heard from those on the receiving end of the innovation: What were their views? How had it gone for them? In addition, we wanted practitioners to be reflexive about the process; that is: What had they learned? How had they changed? What is important in the accounts we chose was that they provide the detail of innovation and evaluation in a context of reflective practice (RP). This is important because it gives a detailed, situated view and it also makes possible replication, or at least informed action, on the part of other practitioners.

The importance of context

Innovations are not easily generalisable, because each context has its own constraints, affordances and dynamic. This is why an in-depth appraisal of the innovation context is vital before introducing an innovation. The 'hybrid model' (Henrichsen 1989) provides a thorough system for identifying contextual factors likely to facilitate or hinder the change process and this gives us a good start in responding to Holliday's (1994) call for the recognition of the importance of a detailed, ethnomethodological understanding of the innovation situation in making judgements of appropriacy. The idea of being 'appropriate' chimes with ideas of 'situated learning'. If we embrace the ideas of appropriate methodology both in what we are aiming to get our teacher-trainers to achieve and in what we aim for it, this moves us away from ideas of generalised 'best practice' towards 'praxis'. This is essentially where we currently 'live' in a period of 'post-method condition' (Kumaravadivelu 2001). This is a time when there needs to be a renewed and corresponding recognition of the importance of situated learning and appropriate methodology.

Developing situated or appropriate tools

In order for appropriate and situated methodology and learning to happen, tools need to be sufficiently flexible that they can be tailored to specific contexts and facilitate the kind of up-close professional understanding that RP was originally designed to foster. This is why some of the accounts in Edge and Mann (2013) are important. For example, Kurtoğlu-Hooton (2013) shows that RP can and should be *taught* on pre- and in-sessional teacher education programmes but in a more systematic way. Her tools enable close-up and data-led attention to teaching.

New in context

One of the key ideas of Mann and Edge (2013) is that a new idea is not the same as an innovation. Innovation demands that the practitioner concentrates on process; it demands ongoing self-evaluation and reflection; it asks that we pay as much attention to how we teach or train as to which topics get covered along the way, or the tools that we employ. This is why we asked contributors to make clear the steps and detail of introduction, implementation and evaluation of their efforts, because it is the realisation of an '*idea in action*' that constitutes 'genuine innovation'. Mawa Samb's (2013) article on formative assessment would not be seen as a new idea in most contexts. However, it is an innovation in Senegal.

Likewise Lesley Dick's (2013) work in Sri Lanka may not immediately sound like a headline-grabbing innovation. We have all used 'top tips' haven't we, with our teacher-trainees? However, the innovative aspect of Dick's work is that these top tips are an outcome of a bottom-up process of discussion. They are renewed and revisited with each new group. We get a sense from Lesley that the reflective process (stepping back) has established the nature of the task itself:

> *I have used Top Tips in input sessions and in teaching practice feedback sessions for years but have never really taken a step back and queried why it worked and what it did.* (Dick 2013: 143)

Kaizen

There is a Japanese concept that is used in management and business called 'kaizen' and I think it is useful as a metaphor for the kind of innovation that we are promoting in this chapter. 'Kaizen' can be translated as kai ("change") and zen ("good") and, taken together has the meaning of something like "improvement". Its intended effect on the 'workforce' is to engage all workers in the continuous improvement of design. The 'workers' are not only encouraged to engage in a process of continuous evaluation and potential improvement but they are empowered to feel that they have both a voice and input. If we apply the same concept to teaching and teacher training we can focus on the following:

- The practice of continuous quality improvement within one's teaching;
- Innovation is based on many small changes rather than radical changes;
- Ideas for change and improvement come from teachers and students themselves;
- Teachers take ownership for their work and related improvements.

For me this is a potentially powerful way of looking at innovation. For most of us it will not be eureka moments that make a difference to quality. Rather it will be a series of much smaller-scale modifications and small changes. I remember Jane Willis once talking about the importance of small tweaks in task-based learning and teaching. These kinds of tweaks are very much what the concept of kaizen foregrounds.

Icarus and Narcissus

Having explained that I think kaizen can help us characterise innovation as a reflexive process of small actions, I want to pause and share with you the central comparative metaphor in Julian's most recent book. It is called *The Reflexive Teacher Educator in TESOL* (2011). You probably know the individual stories of Icarus and Narcissus. Icarus had wings and flew higher than he should. Narcissus stayed too long observing himself and put down roots. They are both seen as failures. However, Julian argues that they represent a dynamic and inevitable tension that propels us forward in our professional practice, where 'the mutually-shaping interactions between our roots and our wings, our self-knowledge and our environmental knowledge' provide awareness so that we can 'commit ourselves

to future action based on that combined awareness' (Edge 2011:17). We need to know our context and ourselves (where we currently are) in order to make the kind of small-scale innovation that is appropriate future action. Of course, the tension between Narcissus and Icarus is not the only one we have to negotiate as teacher trainers. For example, we need to negotiate a balance between direction and reflection (see Farr 2011). At this point, I will hand over to Julian.

Innovation: some concerns from Julian

Shortly after my last visit to India, I remember being greatly encouraged by the publication of Naidu et al (1992). The authors reported in depth on a piece of collaborative teacher research in which they emphasised the importance of *articulating* to each other the thinking behind what they actually *did* in class:

> *By naming what we do we have recovered our practice, which otherwise might have been lost irretrievably (a fate we believe that many teachers have suffered). Further, we can now identify for ourselves what aspects of our practice we are confident of and what we need to strengthen.* (p.261)

I find those words, '*a fate we believe that many teachers have suffered,*' to be among the most hauntingly resonant ever written in the field, and as relevant now as they were then as teachers are still encouraged to believe that their job is to somehow 'apply' other people's so-called 'theories'. As Kumaravadivelu (2006) puts it:

> *Since the audiolingualism of the 1940s, TESOL has seen one method after another roll out of western universities and through western publishing houses to spread out all over the world. On each occasion, teachers in other countries and other cultures have been assured that this one is the correct one, and that their role is to adapt it to their learners, or their learners to it.* (p.20)

Politics, Neo-Colonialism and Globalism

We know well enough (Kumaravadivelu 2006) how the historical British/USA succession in terms of massive economic, military and cultural influence on world affairs has resulted in the current importance of the English language. We know well enough that the driving purpose of globalism is to allow money to move freely around the world to where it can find its biggest margins of profit, and then move on when the time is right, leaving behind what it can no longer use. We know full well that such dominance and such care-free profits depend on the teaching of English. And that is how we earn our livings.

Another perspective responds that we teach English because that is what our people, and especially our young people, need if they are to get a good education, if they are to get good jobs, if they are to attain positions of influence. This is the discourse of empowerment, and empowerment through English. So, which is it? English for continuing domination or English for empowerment?

Hegemony and paradox

Here we have what I understand to be the inescapable paradox of *hegemony*: the kind of power that invites you to support it because you and yours and those you care about can so clearly be helped, encouraged and, yes, empowered by taking advantage of the structures and possibilities that this same organisation of power offers you. And so, on a daily basis, we act in ways that support power structures of which, in principle, we might not approve.

I say the inescapable paradox of hegemony, because that is how I see it. But that is not to say that we do not have choices. Indeed, as teaching is not simply a way of providing global capital with the workforce that it requires to maximise its profits, as teaching is also a values-based commitment to moral and ethical activity, being clear about what choices we do have is an essential part of teaching and of teacher education.

Given a commitment to democracy, we might say, we cannot choose to ignore the massive public demand for English. Equally, we have an ethical imperative not to follow educational policies that serve only to advantage further those people already advantaged by the status quo.

Social justice and multilingual approaches

To pick up again the theme of what we know, we know well enough how the language learning experiences and theories of monolingual speakers of English have historically dominated the academic understanding of language acquisition. We know well enough (e.g. Meganathan 2011) that India is massively multilingual, as a country, as a number of communities and in the individual lives of its citizens. Over recent years, research and scholarship that regard social justice as a core element of educational purpose, and that see multilingualism as a natural human resource, not as an aberrant problem (e.g. Mohanty et al. 2009, Mukherjee 2009) have provided the bases for a number of well-grounded analyses and proposals regarding social justice, for example:

> *English in India today is a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and fuller participation in national and international life … However, the disparity in the quality of English language education experienced by children further intensifies the already existing divide between English language-rich and English language-poor children.* (Meganathan 2011: 58)

Also other proposals have emphasised the benefits of multilingual approaches to teaching English:

> *Decades of work confirms that learning is most effective when a child has eight to ten years of good teaching through the medium of the mother-tongue, accompanied by a gradual introduction of other languages, first as subjects, then partly also as teaching languages. This ensures*

> *a solid, cognitive foundation for learning non-language subjects. It allows acquisition of other languages while retaining and developing the mother tongue. And it results in better learning of other languages, when compared to non-mother-tongue teaching models.* (Rao 2013: 274)

Specific suggestions regarding the teacher's multilingual potential have also been developed, such as:

> *The findings of the study show that even when the teacher was not a speaker of the children's L1, she was a learner of that language. Her sensitivity towards the children's language allowing freedom of usage of that language in class had a positive impact on the learning of English.* (Aggarwal 2013: 62)

The presentation at TEC14 by Prakash and Premachandra (2014) also contributed to the record of reflective practice in this crucial area of multilingual teaching. In such a massively multilingual setting as India, it is not difficult to question the pre-eminence of theories of language acquisition, learning and teaching that have been modelled so determinedly on the workings of the monolingual brain.

These ideas are now also at work in teacher education, as demonstrated by Bedadur (2013) and reported by Bedadur and Vijayalakshmi (2013):

> *The vast canvas of regional languages and dialectic variations poses many challenges. The burden of incomprehension, the lack of access and materials and a history of immersion approaches loom large on the historical horizon of multilingual pedagogy. Yet experiments on a small scale tell the story of a culturally viable pedagogy which needs to be developed if we want to have equal access to English education in marginalised areas.* (p. 70)

So, as I always encourage myself to ask, so what? What is to be done?

At least, and for a beginning, I might want to insist that these socio-political issues are seen as core elements in a teacher education syllabus. Teachers, of course, have the right to refuse to engage with the dilemmas involved if they so choose, but teacher educators do not have the right to leave the next generation of teachers uninformed about them. If the class of 2030 starts to ask:

- Why did we kill off our indigenous languages?
- Why didn't we recognise the interactions among early language use, cognitive development and education?
- Why did we prioritise increasing opportunities for the wealthy over social mobility and social justice?
- Wasn't it clear that those societies that had the smaller gaps between rich and poor were also more stable, less violent, less prone to drug abuse and other miseries?

- Wasn't it obvious that 'globalisation' meant the global freedom of money to move around to where it could make most profit and move on when profits fell, taking its jobs and its promises with it?

In the face of such questions, neither teachers nor teacher educators will want to rely on the Eichmann defence, '*I was just following instructions*.' It is not enough to give instructions on how to teach English, or even on how to become reflective practitioners of, or action researchers in, the teaching of English, without consideration of the larger social, moral and ethical context in which that work is done.

Of course, I am an old, male, Anglo-Saxon, UK-based, native speaker of British English and the advantages that I have gained from those accidents of birth have been many. When I talk of hegemony and advise distrust of outside experts, you might see me as condemned out of my own mouth. I have come to understand better a Bob Dylan song from 1964, in which he sings of:

> *Fearing not I'd become my enemy in the instant that I preach.*

Paradox is endemic in hegemonic situations. At which point, I hand back to Steve.

Outro

Thanks, Julian. I have deliberately not used the word 'conclusion' but the term 'outro' instead (the opposite of 'intro'). I think it does a better job of making clear that anything we write or say is part of an ongoing process. I am glad to have the opportunity to work again with Julian and have conversations with other reflective practitioners in Pune, Chennai, Kolkata, Chandigarh, Delhi (as well as Hyderabad). Collaborations are what make our professional lives interesting. If you find colleagues who can support you in articulating your own ideas and reflecting on your practice then it is easier to embrace and commit to an ongoing sense of innovation, I think.

My final comment is that, for us as teacher trainers it is important to practise what we preach. Moon worries that 'while teacher educators promote reflection among teachers', they 'seem to have less tendency to consider reflection as a method for their own practice' (Moon 1999: 57). There is no point in telling trainee teachers all about reflective practice and the importance of innovation if there is no sign of it from us (the teacher trainers). There's the challenge.

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Theme one

Innovations in Continuing Professional Development for English language teacher educators and teachers

The House of Dos and Don'ts: teachers, self-access and learner autonomy

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Abstract

While in many countries, self-access systems involving learners working more autonomously than in the classroom have become commonplace, there are also still contexts around the world where self-access and autonomy are very unfamiliar concepts. This paper examines two such contexts, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. It will examine why, in this type of context, there is a considerable risk of failure for implementation of self-access systems and how conservative perceptions of teaching and learning represent a major potential obstacle to effective implementation, however plentiful resources may be. It will propose that these risks can only be mitigated through systematic CPD and will examine in depth the rationale, design and impact of a CPD programme aiming to support all involved with self-access systems.

Introduction

In many countries, self-access systems have become commonplace but there are also still contexts around the world where self-access and autonomy are very unfamiliar concepts. While research on self-access has accessed the views of users and teachers, much of this has examined self-access operations in Europe or other well-developed educational environments. Only a handful of studies (e.g. Jones 1995; Joshi 2011; Ahmadi 2012) have investigated contexts where the idea of self-access is completely new.

This paper examines two such contexts, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. It will examine why, in such contexts, there is a considerable risk of failure in implementing self-access systems, especially because conservative perceptions of teaching and learning represent a major potential obstacle to success. It will propose that risks involved can only be mitigated through systematic CPD and will examine the rationale, design and impact of a CPD programme aiming to support all involved with self-access systems.

Self-access learning described here was delivered through two projects: in Ethiopia, the Peacekeeping English Project and in Afghanistan, the English for Security and Defence Project. These two projects vary in a number of ways but also have many similarities. Both projects are managed by the British Council on behalf of sponsors including the British Embassy, the UK Ministry of Defence and (in the case of Ethiopia) the Africa Conflict Prevention Fund with the aim of working

in partnership with local partners to secure sustainability after eventual handover. Both projects support the delivery of English to military officers. The projects employ or support the employment of national staff with a consequent emphasis on training. There is a focus on self-access delivery and the establishment of self-access centres, although resourcing, administration and the extent of countrywide reach differ. In projects such as these, either complementing or substituting classroom study, self-access can accelerate rates of learning and mean personnel are ready to *interoperate* (communicate in English in crisis or conflict situations) sooner and more effectively. Self-access can support the development of more resourceful, independent learners who 'take charge of their own learning' (Holec 1981: 3) after course completion. It enables learners to meet their own needs and aspirations, working at their own pace, fitting learning into demanding military lives and adds variety to learning.

Self-access challenges

However, in more difficult contexts, self-access systems often fail or collapse soon after the departure of the funding organisation. Often, concerns by project management centre on the misuse of resources and neglect, situations in which equipment and resources may be damaged, dispersed or put to inappropriate uses. However, the opposite strategy of over-zealous protection of resources can result in just as negative a situation. Concerns (especially those of local military administrations) about possible theft or misuse may lead to a lack of accessibility of resources and, at worst, result in self-access centres that survive handover in pristine condition but are barely used or not used at all. The most significant obstacle to self-access, though, seems be rooted in the beliefs about effective teaching and learning held by self-access stakeholders (users, coordinators, teachers and administration). In both countries, the role of a teacher is close to that of a factory operator attending to the machinery that churns out knowledge into the empty heads of trainees and the possibility of choice, a key concept in self-access, is rarely considered.

Studies (e.g. Édes 2007) have shown that teachers with positive previous experience of self-access are much more likely to motivate their students to use it – but none of the stakeholders in the two contexts had had any type of self-access component to their own education and there are few opportunities in either country for self-access. The idea of learner autonomy was also very new. Some teachers reported that they had been introduced to the idea of learner autonomy during their initial country-based training, but had not come across practical applications of the concept.

During and after CPD, teacher-coordinators were asked to retrospectively report what their conception of self-access had been at entry point to the project. While some more recently recruited coordinators in Afghanistan described a feeling of excitement at the prospect of working at the centre, their more experienced colleagues remembered being sceptical as to possible success. In Ethiopia, teachers emphasised that they had initial concerns that they would be held

responsible for breakage or misuse of equipment and, in a memorable phrase, one teacher described the SAC as the 'House of Dos and Don'ts' – a heavily regulated, intimidating, best-avoided operation.

We suggest that it is essential that these beliefs and perspectives – and many other aspects of self-access implementation and use – are dealt with fully through training. Stakeholders in Ethiopia, Afghanistan were provided with the opportunity to participate in intensive training that was founded on a number of key principles.

Principle 1: CPD needs to engage with the beliefs and perceptions of stakeholders.
In order to 'adapt to their new roles successfully' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 13), stakeholders need opportunities to restructure deeply held beliefs on teaching and learning. One training strategy was to ask trainees to reflect on situations outside the classroom and to consider the characteristics of real-life customer service encounters (both satisfying and unsatisfying) through which the idea of choice emerged naturally. Trainees offered their own experiences of limited choice in less than successful service encounters and then applied lessons learnt to self-access delivery. Trainees were also asked to describe their own non-language-based experiences of learning something autonomously themselves. These accounts enabled them to reach conclusions on language learning in the classroom and to identify what makes an effective learner.

Principle 2: Effective self-access needs systems and procedures: stakeholders need the opportunity to design, revise and have ownership of these systems and procedures.
Self-access needs systems and procedures to be in place, including needs analysis, learner guidance, counselling and feedback mechanisms. Too often, however, these procedures are imposed top down and require personnel to implement systems which they may not fully understand, value or even like (see Martyn and Voller 1993: 105). In CPD described here, as far as possible, trainees were asked to design and revise systems and procedures themselves. We began by examining a range of examples. Trainees were asked to identify what they liked about these examples and supported in synthesising the results of their discussion into the design of their own procedures and documents which they then implemented.

Principle 3: Resources in themselves are not enough: opportunities need to be provided for stakeholders to engage with resources.
The provision of resources is often one of the most top down of all interventions related to self-access but all stakeholders benefit from familiarisation and engagement with those resources. Trainees were given the opportunity to experiment with resources they were least familiar with and report back in order to identify those that could be used to meet specific needs. Opportunities were provided for the more experienced to train the less experienced. Throughout the training, teacher-coordinators were encouraged to give their opinions on what further resources could be purchased.

Principle 4: Self-access implementers can contribute to the development of resources, and need support to enable them to do this.
Trainees in Ethiopia identified that locally produced materials were necessary a) to target local cultural contexts and users' backgrounds and b) to widen access to a range of authentic military-oriented materials. Course planning aimed to expose trainees to a range of sample tasks and to enable participants to produce materials which were appropriate for particular levels, had clear aims and were well presented. Teachers and coordinators in Afghanistan were due to participate in similar training.

Principle 5: Effective self-access development requires support for and development of the problem-solving and evaluation skills of stakeholders.
The process of development needed some difficult questions to be asked and challenges to be identified and solved. It was important to discourage specific groups of stakeholders from 'passing the buck' to other stakeholder groups and to focus on trainees working to find realistic solutions. The course aimed to develop an atmosphere of honest, objective and constructive evaluation and provide opportunities for participants to raise issues and discuss the challenges they themselves perceived.

Impact

Impact on stakeholder beliefs and attitudes
Trainee responses were gathered through questionnaires and one-to-one interviews. Trainees were quite articulate in describing how their opinions had changed and were able to revise their perceptions of their own roles:

- *The CPD helped me to transform the traditional teacher-based teaching approach to more effective learner based language learning in the classroom and the SAC. I think this is a milestone in my entire professional career* (teacher, Ethiopia).
- *Through this course, I've realised that self-access, which is a completely new culture in Afghanistan, is the most effective culture* (coordinator, Afghanistan).
- *A diet of cheese is not enough* (programme manager, Afghanistan).

Impact on implementation and effectiveness of systems and procedures
However, what stakeholders say they do may well be different from what they actually do in practice. Actual practice was monitored through visits by project staff and identified that needs analysis procedures had been put in place, counselling sessions were taking place and enhanced guidance had been provided for users. A shift from 'lockstep' sessions (all users doing the same thing at the same time) to ones in which users worked more independently was observed in Ethiopia and is also currently taking place in Afghanistan.

Impact on exploitation of resources and tasks design
'Accessibility' became something of a buzzword with CPD participants, and training led to a great deal of unlocking and emptying of cupboards, repositioning of

shelves and introduction of loan systems. Some significant progress was also made in terms of task design. This was undertaken in the form of mini-projects with trainees working in pairs or small groups, producing drafts which were trialled, redrafted and modified.

Impact as assessed by self-access users
In early 2013, colleagues in Ethiopia undertook a survey of one hundred users to identify perceptions of self-access (Hailelul et al. 2013) which can be compared to a limited survey at one base in 2010. When the two sets of information are contrasted, a very positive impact on self-access use can be identified. While some of the 2010 feedback was positive, a sense of frustration on the part of users was also evident, with complaints about the lack of access to the centre, a feeling of being lost amidst resources they barely understood and a small but significant minority feeling that self-access did not really contribute to learning at all.

The 2013 feedback was much more positive. 91% of users stated that they were free to choose materials and software and 86% strongly agreed that the SAC was easy to use. All users reported that they used the centre at least once a week. 82% of users said that they based their learning on their personal log. Comments included:

> When I started to use the SAC, it was difficult. After I learned about the SAC, I can use it easily
> The SAC is easy to use, even in the absence of teachers, one can learn different skills alone.

Lessons learnt

There were many challenges, of course. Some centres implemented systems for one course of learning but abandoned (or forgot) them on the next. Occasionally, changes in local military administration meant the cycle of change had to be begun again. In Afghanistan, logistical and security concerns slowed the process down and limited effective monitoring and feedback. Some stakeholder beliefs, especially on the pre-eminence of grammar and the degree to which learning can be 'controlled', proved to be deeply entrenched. Both impact and challenges suggested a number of lessons learnt, including:

Innovation depends on people and not things.
CPD aimed to provide training and support at each stage of implementing self-access systems and procedures for *people* and reduce risks perceived as resulting in many contexts from a focus on supplying *things*, such as infrastructure and resources. Resources are essential but any success described here has been just as much as a result of the development of the skills, beliefs and behaviour of stakeholders. We cannot simply provide things on the expectation that people will simply find a way to use them.

Innovation needs to take people's beliefs (on what makes effective teaching and learning for example) into account and provide opportunities for them to reconsider and restructure their beliefs.

No innovation can be successful unless stakeholders are helped to identify and articulate their beliefs and, if appropriate, restructure them. CPD awareness-raising activities enabled participants to express and revise their beliefs, and apply them in real-life problem solving and discussion of challenges. Trainee discussion was at least as important as any training input.

Innovation needs time.
In both countries, projects benefited from the fact that funding was available for intensive training over time for a relatively small group of stakeholders. The original course in Ethiopia benefited from extensive follow-up at bases, while in Afghanistan, logistical and security factors have meant that CPD has been delivered in segments over weeks and months.

Innovation needs ownership.
Participants need to be involved as much as possible in the design of systems, procedures, tasks and other self-access routines. This may take longer but has a clear advantage in providing a sense of ownership.

Innovation needs the involvement and commitment of all stakeholders.
Successful innovation needs to engage with the awareness of all stakeholders not only those working directly with learners. The support of administration is essential not only to ensure that processes are implemented but also to remind personnel what should be in place and to monitor change.

Innovation needs to be 'joined up'.
The projects described here were relatively small scale, and it was comparatively easy to interrelate different strands of the project. Participants were able to make connections between the CPD for self-access and other courses they were involved in such as testing and classroom methodology and the impact of one CPD programme fed into that of others.

Innovation needs to be accompanied by support for critical thinking skills.
A conscious aim of CPD was to help participants critically evaluate systems and challenges and find solutions. Throughout CPD, over time, participants matured and developed as people, interacted more and more effectively and grew in range and depth of perception.

Conclusions

Despite challenges, the process of change was, in the contexts described here, quite dramatic and, given the foreignness of the whole idea of self-access, involved a radical shift in stakeholder beliefs. One Ethiopian coordinator summarised this in the following way:

> *The CPD opened my eyes and I looked into the SAC which is like a sea full of fish and learnt how to give guidance and counselling to learners and how to use the SAC to its maximum potential.*

It is a long way from the 'House of Dos and Don'ts' to 'a sea full of fish'.

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Generating content through online collaborative writing: a study

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Abstract

This paper reports how language learning content was generated by encouraging a group of young ESL learners to write in an online students' magazine on the web. Though a plethora of rich language learning materials abound on the internet, the scarce physical infrastructure in the classroom, in this case, a government Bengali-medium school in Kolkata, makes these resources inaccessible to the average learner. Aimed to bridge this gap, an Internet-based writing project was undertaken to engage the learners in an online collaborative task. The learners were given the opportunity to use the target language, English, in a communicative manner as they actively participated in a paragraph writing task based on artworks produced by other learners in the school. The findings indicate that by engaging with the collaborative writing task, the learners generated content through relevant lexical search and writing coherent paragraphs to describe and/or interpret the artworks. The project may have decreased the 'affective filter' of the learners, by promoting peer learning and interaction, thus increasing learners' motivation and increased production of the target language. This small-scale classroom research can be replicated or adapted in the ESL classroom to develop writing skills of young ESL/ EFL learners at various proficiency levels.

Introduction

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is yet to make its prominence felt in the government and government-aided schools of West Bengal. Though the computer has made inroads into all institutions across the state, many teachers are yet to discover and realize its potential in creating and fostering a language learning environment in their classrooms. I too was a part of this group, and never endeavoured to use the computer in my class until an e-course entitled "Integrating the Internet into the classroom" by Michael Krauss of Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon changed my perspective (January 2013). The course taught me ways of exploring the internet for content material to be used in the ESL writing class. I learnt that learners are likely to be motivated if they are presented with cognitively challenging materials that are relevant to their lives and levels of cognitive maturity. The course design made me understand that the Internet can be effectively used as a creation tool (i.e. a production and publishing centre) and an activity centre in any classroom irrespective of the number or the level of learners it caters.

I endeavoured to use the Internet and computer to stimulate discussion and writing skills in a group of young ESL learners through a small classroom-based

research. I also strove to examine whether authentic classroom materials could be designed from the online magazine and tailor them to fit the specific needs of my learners for promoting writing skills. After all 'the internet is an egalitarian meeting place where each individual can crank up their own printing press and where the best netizens post their best works for others to access freely' (March 1995).

Literature review

Many teacher educators like Krauss and March are of the opinion that the natural place to begin integrating the web for learning is collecting sites that are most useful or interesting for the specific age group one wishes to teach: 'look for sparks that create insights, the contrasts that excite problem solving, the bells and whistles that motivate, the passion that inspires' (March 1995). Computers can be used as a language learning tool to foster communicative activities and facilitate the teaching process by providing 'a stimulus for learning by increasing social interactions and cooperation' (Hoyles, Healy and Pozzi 1992) in the ESL class.

In the ESL writing class, teachers need to use materials which are creative and learning-centred. They should provide stimulating activities to focus students' attention on the task at hand. Moreover the materials should be interesting. 'Writing is basically a process of communicating something (content) on paper to an audience. If the writer has nothing to say, writing will not occur' (Oluwadiya 1992). So, a web magazine, which is easily available through the internet, can easily provide a stimulating context and motivate learners to participate and generate content.

Another way of generating content in the writing class is to use visual aids like pictures and artworks. At the lower intermediate level, learners' faces may go blank when they are asked to write on any given topic. 'Teachers can avoid prolonged silence and prevent their students from feeling embarrassed by providing them with a picture' (Albano 2013). Responding to artwork can be very stimulating and can lead to a variety of writing activities. 'Incorporating art into the class can take students out of the classroom and encourage them to use their language skills in the real world' (Lightfoot 2007). According to Eaton and Jogan (1992) the main criteria for selecting art to be used for English language classroom activities are availability in an inexpensive form and appropriateness for the specific activity and learner levels. So, I took up this classroom research to promote collaborative writing by using the internet, computer and artworks as aids. The details of this project and its salient findings with pedagogical implications are reported in the rest of the paper.

Setting

Like many traditional classrooms in state-run schools, my classroom does not possess any facilities apart from the blackboard. Learners get access to computers for a brief 30 minutes during their computer classes in the computer lab, which has only twelve computers to cater to the entire school. I had to obtain permission from the Head of my school to conduct this project. I could use three computers

and therefore selected six students of mixed ability and with varied levels of computer use in their personal lives. Since they were all mobile savvy and were conversant with chat on various applications, they were motivated to participate in the project.

Genuine communication in English hardly takes place in a typical government-run school in West Bengal. In the writing class, patterned compositions are given and learners are expected to memorize and faithfully reproduce content during the end of the year summative examinations. Learners are neither encouraged to write independently nor are given appropriate scaffolds to structure their writing. The writing tasks given in exams are assessed primarily for accuracy and spelling; little attention is given to content. In this small-scale study, I attempted to examine the following research questions:

1. Does artwork on the web enhance collaborative communication?
2. Can this communication lead to content generation through writing?
3. Is there a positive impact of this novel activity on the learner's mind?

The project

An online student magazine (centerstagejunior.com) became the launch pad for my project. The web magazine was the perfect space to utilize as it teemed with student artwork and write-ups from different schools of Calcutta. A twin artwork from the magazine (see Appendix 1B) was used as a stimulus to generate communication and complete a paragraph writing task.

At the outset, I introduced the learners to the online magazine where they could register and contribute their own creative works for sharing with the greater community. I showed them how students of various schools across the city had contributed and uploaded their own artworks, sketches, anecdotes, photographs and write-ups. I knew that they would be enthused to send drawings and paintings; but I wished them to generate a write-up that could go into the magazine, prompted by an artwork contributed by another learner. With that end in view, I had downloaded two artworks and displayed it on their computer screens. I asked the three pairs to collaboratively come up with sufficient ideas to write a coherent paragraph. I asked them to type out whatever words, phrases and sentences they could think of regarding the artwork and later write paragraphs using those words/phrases.

I wanted the writing activity to be entirely learner-driven as one of my objectives was to determine their comprehension of the subject matter, here the content of the twin artworks, which portrayed the life of a typical Indian farmer on the field (see Appendix 1B). They were instructed to work together to organize the written ideas generated from the artwork, make corrections and master the method required for discerning and extracting information from the visual in front of their eyes. The artwork was used to serve as an example of 'comprehensible input' which would be the impetus for language production among the pairs.

The aim of the project was to evaluate whether students could gather material through observing, brainstorming, making notes and talking to each other through authentic material downloaded from the internet relevant to their lives. It also aimed to establish writing as a communicative act composed of three basic stages: pre-writing, composing and post-writing reflective stages. The tools used were (see Appendices 1A-1C):

a. a downloaded twin artwork from an online school magazine;

b. a paragraph writing task, and

c. a questionnaire-based learner interview to study the impact of the activity in the learner's mind.

Findings and discussion

We report the salient findings according to the three research questions that this study addresses:

Pre-writing stage: Does an artwork on the web enhance collaborative communication?
The pair activity was conducted on three computer terminals. The learners engaged in a thorough lexical search closely linked to the artworks given as stimuli. This is evident in the list of words and phrases presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Thematically related words/phrases listed during the lexical search stage

	Objects/names identified	Actions related to a farmer's work	Qualities attributed to the Indian farmer
Pair A	crops, seeds, corn wheat, maize, rice, barley, jute, plant meadow, soil, milk, animals, buffalo, cattle, farm, farmer, harvester farmhouse, field, fence, sickle	harvest crops, sows seeds, waters the plants	hard life
Pair B	tractor, cultivator, oxen, mud houses, village, land, soil, tree, rain	works hard, ploughs land, tills the land, eats under a tree	lives in huts, depends on rains, backbone of the nation, patient, busy, humble, always busy, simple life, poor, son of the soil
Pair C	straw-thatched hut, home, morning, evening, night, vegetables, crops, fruits, dhoti, kurta, turban	wears dhoti and kurta, turban on head; grows vegetable and fruits, works from morning to night, comes back home in the evening	tired, exhausted, unhappy if crops fail, happy when it rains, has no holidays

Table 1 indicates that the learners generated thematically related words and phrases. They are from three related domains of a farmer's life: (a) objects/

names related to the farmer (represented as NPs); (b) actions the farmer engages in (represented as VPs); and (c) qualities attributed to the typical Indian farmer (represented as adjPs). These findings affirm research question 1 that *a piece of artwork on the web enhances collaborative communication* as the learners generated a rich repertoire of lexis.

A rich lexical search was perhaps possible because the picture on the screen acted as a scaffold and actively engaged the learners. Each pair focused on the task at hand and generated ideas closely linked to the artworks. So, the picture on the screen facilitated learner communication and the internalization of material and enough ideas were produced to develop a coherent paragraph. Peer support helped in the generation of content in the form of task-appropriate words and phrases. The learners were also found to discuss with their peers how they would arrange the words and phrases in a proper sequence giving a fitting introduction and conclusion to the paragraph they were supposed to write in the next phase

Composing stage: Can collaborative communication lead to content generation through writing?
After the brainstorming phase, the learners were instructed to move on to the actual writing phase in which they were expected to write a paragraph on the life of a typical Indian farmer. Using the words/phrases listed in Table 1, the three pairs produced the three paragraphs given in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Paragraphs produced by the three pairs of learners

Pair A	A farmer lives in the village. He grows all types of vegetables and cereals. He grows rice, maize, wheat and various vegetables like brinjals, potatoes, tomatoes, cabbages, carrots and raddish. He grows many crops in his farm. He has cows and buffaloes to help him till the land. Before sowing the seeds, he prepares the land well by ploughing. He is always busy working. His family members too help him in sowing, tilling, ploughing and harvesting.
Pair B	He works in his field in both summer and winter. He gets up early before sunrise and goes to his land to cultivate. His tools are the sickle, spade and plough. Often his wife comes in the afternoon to give his lunch. Mostly he eats rice, dal and chapattis. After having food he gets busy again in his land. He harvests a good crop by working hard all day. Then he ties them in a bundle and carries them to the market to sell.
Pair C	A farmer works in a field. He sows seeds, tills the land and harvests crops. He is a simple man. He wears a dhoti and a vest. He is without chappals sometimes. He leads a hard life in the village. He has no holidays. He works from early morning to late evening. He carries loads of crops bundled on his back. He is our real friend. He grows crops for us. Without him, we would not get any food. He loves his farm and his land. If crops fail, he is unhappy.

In Table 2, we can see that the learner pairs wrote paragraphs based on the sets of words and phrases they generated during the lexical search phase. An interesting trend is noticed: Pair **A** concentrated more on naming objects and wrote in detail about the action of the farmer in relation to the crops he produces and the process of tilling the soil. But they do not comment on the farmer as much as Pairs B and C do. Pair **B** concentrate more on the daily life of the farmer, like his routine,

food habits, and the process of harvesting. This description reads like a process description. Pair **C** describe the farmer in relation to his attire and what kind of work he does. They comment extensively on the quality of life that the farmer has and evaluate his role in our lives. So, of the three pairs, A and B focus more on the details of the life of the farmer while Pair C is able to go beyond a simple description and analyse the life of the farmer. The third description is therefore of a higher cognitive complexity (Bloom's taxonomy as cited in Krathwohl 2002) evident in thoughts expressed; but linguistically all the three texts are more or less at a similar level with many simple sentences. Moreover, all the three pairs used conjunctions such as additives (*and*), time markers (*before, after, then*) and conditionals (*if, without*) to hold their ideas together. Another noteworthy point noticed is that all the three pairs not only used the words and phrases they generated in the lexical search stage, but they also added more ideas to write coherent paragraphs with a perceptible introduction, body and conclusion. So, the quality of the paragraphs clearly supports research question 2: *collaborative communication can lead to content generation through writing.*

Post-writing stage: Is there a positive impact of this novel activity on the learner's mind?
After the learners finished working on the paragraphs, they were given a questionnaire (see Appendix 1C) and asked to respond to it in writing. A critical discussion was conducted based on their responses about the relative effectiveness of this novel writing activity in the ESL classroom.

The questionnaire had four sets of questions which yielded the following responses from the six learners. The first set was on access to computers and online writing habits to which all the three pairs responded in the affirmative and expressed that either they wrote emails or blogs or participated in online chats on social networks through mobile applications. The second and third sets were on the writing activity and the use of artwork to generate writing. All three pairs said that they liked the activity as the artwork helped them generate ideas as is expressed in the following comments:

> *Yes, we strongly feel that they do provide clues. That is because we feel that a picture or artwork tells a story (for example, the picture we got today was about farmers) and we can do very interesting activities by putting them to words.* (Pair B)

> *Yes, there was ample stuff in the drawing to expand upon. It literally was a picture worth a thousand words. One can interpret the same image in million different ways. So it is rife with clues.* (Pair C)

The learners stated that they found writing through computers stimulating and it helped them edit their work with ease. The last set was included to obtain their comments on collaborative writing and the role of peers as resources. To this also they responded positively as they wrote that peers helped them generate content and helped them edit and reflect on their work as is expressed in the following comments:

Yes, my friends were helpful. We talked about the different pictures we got and discussing them together helped me a lot. (Pair B)

It was good to hear others interpret the artworks in a completely different manner…it was illuminating. (Pair C)

So, the learners found the collaborative writing task interesting and motivating and this indicates that, in line with the third research question, *there is a positive impact of this novel activity on the learner's mind.*

Conclusion

To conclude, the project helped generate the learners' original ideas and provided an opportunity to generate content through engagement with the computer and artwork. They seemed to get deeply enmeshed in the task and wanted to give of their very best. Working in pairs, they completed the writing assignment by mutual co-operation and assistance by giving expression to their thoughts. This process-oriented approach made them complete the assignment successfully, exchanging ideas and deriving mutual support and encouragement from their peers.

From this small-scale classroom study we can conclude that if teachers encourage their students to utilize the manifold resources available online, then learners can access lots of comprehensible inputs in comparison to the skeletal points they are familiar with in their usual guided writing exercises. The context is likely to lower the 'affective filter' and motivate learners to write to produce better content and control the process of writing through revision and redrafts by using the 'monitor' in an optimal manner.

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Appendices

Appendix 1A: Task
Look at the two pictures. These have been drawn by two of your friends and have been published in our school web magazine. Using these two pictures, generate a list of words and then write a coherent paragraph of about 100 words. Work with your peer to do this activity. You will be using the computer to do this activity. You will also have a chance to edit and revise your work.

Appendix 1B: Artworks used as stimuli

(Illustrated by Prasenjit Das, Hare School, published here with the kind permission of Centre Stage Junior online magazine, centrestagejunior.com)

(Illustrated by Barnamoy Roy, St. Augustine's Day School, Kolkata, published here with the kind permission of Centre Stage Junior online magazine, centrestagejunior.com)

Appendix 1C: Learner questionnaire

I. Access to computers at home and writing habits	a. Do you have access to a computer at home? b. Have you used a computer before? c. Do you use social network platforms? d. Do you keep in touch with friends via Facebook? e. Do you upload any of your creative outputs online for your friends to see & comment? f. Do you write e-mails to friends or blog? g. Does the concept of an e-magazine excite you where you can post and share with others? Why?
II. Comments on the writing activity and using computers	a. Did you feel threatened or nervous to write during this activity? b. Could you organize your ideas clearly? c. Did you write a title? Why?/Why not? d. Did typing on the computer screen seem problematic? e. Did the computer aid the writing process in any way? f. Did you check/revise? How?
III. Notion about online writing and artwork	a. Don't you think it is great to share writings and artwork via the computer? b. Did you like the artwork in today's activity? Was it better or worse than a real picture? c. Do you feel the artwork provided sufficient clues to set your ideas rolling? d. Do you feel that artworks or pictures provide clues to generate a writing activity? e. After today's activity do you feel that an online magazine can be a platform for both creativity and learning?
IV. Comments on collaborative writing and peer work	a. Were your friends helpful? If yes, how? b. Did today's activity lead to interesting conversations among your peers?

Using Web 2.0 tools for teacher professional development: a case study

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Abstract

This paper reports a case study of an online teacher development programme that focused on familiarizing a heterogeneous group of ESL teachers with Web 2.0 tools for language teaching purposes. The study tries to find out how teachers respond to Web 2.0-based professional development programmes and the impact the use of these tools has on the programme. The findings suggest that individual motivation of teachers plays a major role in how they respond to the programme and the employment of web tools contributes to the effect of the programme. The most important pedagogical implication of the study is that Web 2.0-enabled online teacher education holds great potential in ESL contexts like India, but it should be inducted carefully and in consultation with teachers. There should be more research to gauge the effectiveness of such programmes.

Background to the study

The preparation and professional development of English teachers in India have been matters of concern (Mahapatra 2011; Padwad 2011). Government-sponsored programmes have not yet been able to meet the demand for properly trained English teachers at various levels. Though organizations like the British Council and RELO have been supportive in this regard and have been providing professional help to teachers through workshops and online teacher education programmes, a large percentage of teachers still do not get adequate professional support. It is necessary to reach out to these teachers and help them acquire adequate professional expertise. Teachers who are motivated and willing to grow professionally but do not have access to any formal teacher development programmes can be helped through Web 2.0-embedded online professional development programmes. Now that India has become the third largest user of the Internet in the world, this seems to be a viable option.

The current study is presented in several sections. These sections contain a review of existing research on the use of Web 2.0 in teacher education, the methodology employed for the study, the procedure of data collection, findings and discussion, implications of the study, suggestions for further research, and a conclusion.

Use of Web 2.0 in teacher education: review of current research

Web 2.0 tools comprise interactive web platforms like blogs, wikis, and social networks, and are a step beyond Web 1.0, which includes e-mail, chat rooms

and discussion boards (McLoughlin and Lee 2007). Whereas Web 1.0 users are confined to being passive receivers of information, the Web 2.0 user can be an active sharer, editor, collaborator and consumer. There is some research that supports the employment of Web 2.0 tools for promoting effective language learning (Kukulska-Hulme and Shield 2006; Stevenson and Liu 2010; Anwaruddin 2013). It has also been proved that Web 2.0-integrated teacher education holds immense potential (Albion 2008; Al-Ali 2010; Bustamante and Moeller 2013). In the European Commission research report 'Learning 2.0: The Impact of Web 2.0 Innovations on Education and Training in Europe' (2009), it is mentioned that Web 2.0 can be a practical option for teachers to grow professionally at a personal level. Even theoretically, as pointed out by Grant and Mims (2009), Web 2.0-based learning is grounded in constructivist and cognitivist theories.

Though the above-mentioned research sounds encouraging, more studies need to be undertaken to make any strong claim about the effectiveness of Web 2.0 tools for imparting professional education to English language teachers.

Methodology

Research questions
This study was guided by the following questions:

- How do English language teachers respond to a Web 2.0-based PD programme?
- What kind of impact does the use of Web 2.0 tools have on the programme?

Case study approach
A case study approach was adopted for this research to ensure that the aforesaid questions were answered and the problem under scrutiny was examined in an in-depth manner. Apart from a small sample size, several methods were utilized for data collection. The data collected through one method was always corroborated with that obtained through another one.

Participants
The participants for the study comprised a heterogeneous group of ten ESL and EFL teachers practising at different levels of the education system in India and abroad. Seven teachers were from India and one each from Iran, Italy and Dubai. Their age group varied from 25 to 50 years old and their experience from less than five to 15 years. They voluntarily agreed to participate in the study by responding to a free offer posted by the researcher on an educational group on Facebook.

Methods of data collection
The methods of data collection included the following:

- **Electronic portfolio**: It was created and maintained by the researcher to store information and data about the web platforms used by the participants for teaching their own students, the participants' weekly reports about their learning, and his own observation about the participants' progress.

- **Facebook group**: A Facebook group, which had all the participants as its only members, was created. The participants used this group to talk about and respond to their peers' problems and the success experienced while using the newly learnt Web 2.0 tools.
- **Google Site**: The entire training programme was imparted through a Google Site created by the researcher.
- **Google Drive**: The participants reported their progress on a shared Spreadsheet created on a Google Drive. Also, the reading materials, audio and video clips were shared by the researcher with the participants using the same Drive.
- **Sogosurvey**: A needs analysis was conducted before the commencement of the course through a survey developed on Sogosurvey – a free online web platform for carrying out online surveys.

Apart from the above, many other Web 2.0 tools like Voicethread, Spiderscribe and Vocaroo were used for collecting the required data.

Data collection

The data was collected in several phases. Each phase is briefly described in the following sub-sections.

Needs analysis
Before the course began, a needs analysis was conducted to get information about the participants' teaching background, their familiarity with using the Internet for pedagogic purposes, their students' access to the Internet, etc. Six multiple-choice questions were asked in this online needs analysis survey.

The programme
The 4-week PD course aimed to enable the participants to use a few popular Web 2.0 tools for teaching and learning purposes. After analysing their learning needs, familiarity with and frequency of use of the Internet, and organizational facilities, it was decided to familiarize the participants with using Google Sites, Google Docs/ Drive, Google Hangout, Edmodo, Vocaroo, Voicethread, Wordsift, Penzu, Diigo, Spiderscribe, Blogger, Facebook and Lexia Reading for English language teaching purposes. These tools were almost evenly distributed across four weeks, and the syllabus for each week was shared with the participants at the beginning of the week. A Google Site was developed to post the course content, and access to the site was limited to the participants. A Google Spreadsheet was shared with the participants so that they could report the completion of each task assigned to them every week.

In fact, the researcher employed all the Web 2.0 tools included in the syllabus to transact the programme. It was intentionally done to provide hands-on experience to the participants. The participants, who were actually students, were made to think and act like students.

The participants were asked to submit a weekly report about their progress in the form of a diary entry on Penzu Diary and participate in a Google Hangout every Saturday night from 10 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. In the Hangout, the participants talked about their experience and commented on their peers' performance while the researcher provided them feedback for the week and helped them with their tasks when required. The participants also posted the screen-shots of the web platforms they used during the week on the Facebook group page. The researcher as well as the peers had access to all the web platforms developed and maintained by the participants. He saved the screen-shots of these pages and analysed them to provide feedback.

Assessment of the participants' performance
The performance of the participants was assessed against a set of criteria. The set is presented below.

1. Timely completion of the tasks assigned for the week
2. Quality of the web platforms created
3. Creativity in using the web tools
4. Participation in the Hangout and posts on the Facebook group page
5. Penzu Diary entry
6. Instructor's weekly feedback on individual progress

Though no final grade was assigned to the participants, a final descriptive report was provided to each participant about their overall performance in the programme.

Evaluation of the programme
The programme was evaluated after its completion. The researcher created an online questionnaire and asked the participants to rate the following components on a five-point Likert scale:

- Course website
- Quality of instructions
- Pacing of content
- Utility of the web tools included in the programme
- Feedback about performance
- Response to queries

The responses are presented in the following figure:

Figure 1: Programme evaluation
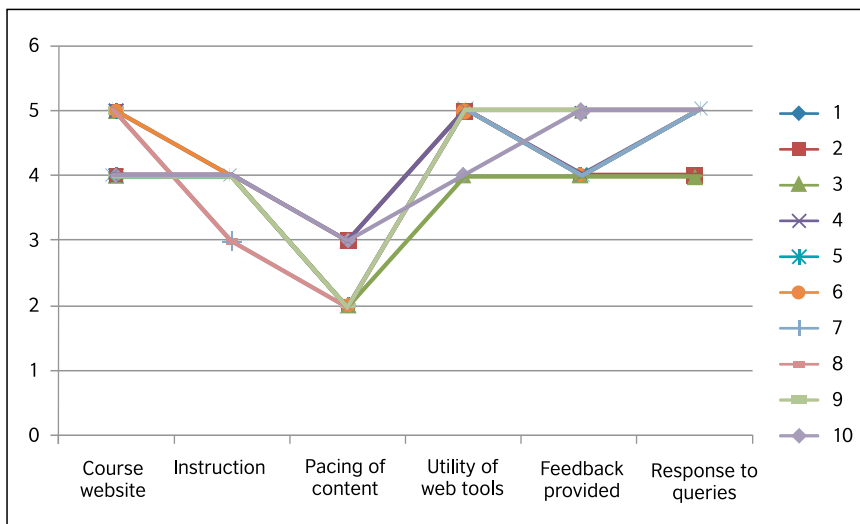
Findings and discussion

The findings of the study are presented through answers to the two previously mentioned research questions.

How do English language teachers respond to a Web 2.0-based PD programme?
Since the participants voluntarily participated in the programme, they displayed a great deal of enthusiasm. But not everyone could explore the web tools on their own. Almost half of them wanted each web tool to be explained to them by the researcher. They were not ready to watch the demo videos posted by the sites concerned and use the tools accordingly. So the researcher had to take screen-shots of web pages and post them on Facebook along with instructions for the participants to follow. It required a lot of patience and time.

It was also found that the participants needed a lot more time than what was given to them to employ these tools with their own students. They wanted more time to feel comfortable with the tools even though they were excited about their new learning. They also reported that they were not happy with the pacing of the programme and wanted to have one instead of four tasks every week. It was also observed that they got a little exhausted by the end of the fourth week.

Discussion
Though Web 2.0 offers an amazing opportunity to help teachers grow professionally, its success is entirely dependent on the motivation of the participants and the patience of the instructor. The length and pacing of the programme must be thought about seriously for any such programme. It may be a good idea to have light courses for teachers, especially for those working in India.

In addition, participants can also be supported and monitored while using web tools in their own teaching-learning situations.

What kind of impact does the use of Web 2.0 tools have on the programme?
The course was conducted using several Web 2.0 tools. It offered more options to the instructor and the participants in terms of convenience and motivation. The participants completed the tasks whenever they had time during the week. The flavour of newness and immense possibilities offered by the web tools added to their motivation. The use of Web 2.0 tools also made the development and transaction of the programme much easier for the researcher. He could monitor the participants' progress and provide them feedback without having to write or type all the time. He utilized voice and video modes to offer feedback.

Discussion
There are several advantages of a Web 2.0-based teacher development programme. It certainly takes away the monotony that is often reported about many teacher education programmes. The innovations involving the induction of web tools add to the enthusiasm and motivation of participants. Moreover, getting access to study materials in written, video and audio forms becomes much easier in an online programme. The participating teachers can complete an online PD programme without any struggle or pressure to find the time to undergo in-service training.

Implications of the study

The study has a few important implications. Any attempt to replace the traditional teacher PD programmes with Web 2.0-supported online PD programmes may backfire if teachers are not taken into confidence. Since teachers need a great deal of motivation to participate in and complete online courses, it should be started on a small-scale. However, keeping in mind the potential of such programmes, more support should be provided to educate teachers about the possibilities offered by Web 2.0 tools.

Another significant implication of the study is that areas of English language teaching like materials design and assessment, which are often ignored in teacher preparation programmes in India, can be focused on in online programmes for English language teachers. It will also compensate for the lack of expertise available in the country in language assessment.

The last of the implications is that it is essential to train teacher trainers/educators in the use of Web 2.0. It is crucial to the success of Web 2.0-based teacher education programmes. Only when teacher trainers/educators acquire some expertise in using Web 2.0 can changes in the traditional teacher education set-up be initiated.

Suggestions for further research

Research on the use of Web 2.0 tools for second language teacher education purposes is still in its infancy. Large-scale studies need to be carried out to see

how formal teacher education programmes are imparted on Web 2.0 platforms. There should also be longitudinal studies to look into changes in teaching practice after teachers undergo such training. It will be quite interesting to know whether online PD programmes are more or less effective than traditional PD programmes.

Conclusion

This small-scale study was an attempt to explore the possibilities of employing Web 2.0 tools for teacher professional development. The study was limited in nature from many angles. Nonetheless, it has been one of the first such attempts made by any individual researcher in the country. It is hoped that this will lead to more research and further exploration in a similar direction in the near future. It can be expected that the recent rise in the number of Internet users will bring positive changes in the field of second language teacher education.

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Professional development programme for British Council Training Consultants – KELTEP 2013

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Abstract

This article mirrors the presentation of the same title at the Teacher Educator Conference 2014 about innovation in Continuing Professional Development for British Council Training Consultants. British Council Training Consultants work on English Partnerships projects of the British Council and this article follows the Training Consultants' professional development journey during the Karnataka English Language Teacher Education Project (KELTEP) and its impact on their development. The training in 2013 was in two stages over ten weeks and some Training Consultants worked for three weeks at a stretch. One of the challenges before the British Council academic team was to keep the team motivated throughout.

Professional development tasks were given to the Training Consultants and feedback on the tasks analysed and reflected upon. This article aims to motivate both an individual practitioner as well as heads of institutions to think of collaborative and individual tasks for the development of Training Consultants.

Introduction

English Partnerships in India partner with state governments to enhance quality in English language teaching and learning in the state schools' sector. The British Council has been working in the State of Karnataka since 2009 and Karnataka English Language Teacher Education Programme (KELTEP) is one of the major English partnerships projects in India. In 2013, 1,200 Master Trainers were trained by British Council Training Consultants who in turn trained 179,393 elementary school teachers from Grades 1 to 8.

The English Partnerships South India team has devised a series of activities geared towards the professional development of the Training Consultants during the training phase of the KELTEP. These activities can be categorised as sharing practice, creating awareness and creating mentoring opportunities. British Council Training Consultants participated in peer observation and co-planning while under the creating awareness category they worked on a case study and did action research. Mentoring opportunities were created for the Training Consultants through a collaborative article writing task.

This article outlines the process of implementing these Continuing Professional Development activities with Training Consultants during the KELTEP project. The tasks themselves are outlined and the reflections from Training Consultant participants shared and analysed. Feedback from the audience at the conference is also included where appropriate and the implications for other professionals are also explored. The article is co-authored by a Training Consultant, who experienced some of the activities, and a member of the British Council academic team who worked on planning the activities.

Co-planning task

British Council Training Consultants were requested to co-plan for the training. Some of the benefits envisaged were:

- standardisation of the content to be delivered
- sharing different perspectives on the materials
- opportunity to clarify content and practice
- articulation of ideas, beliefs and practice.

All of the 21 Training Consultants on the project reported through a feedback questionnaire and telephone interviews that this was a beneficial and positive experience. Eleven Training Consultants who had not experienced co-planning before commented that in future it would be an integral part of their work. There were some issues as regards finding mutually acceptable timings but all Training Consultants agreed that it was enriching to plan together.

Peer observation task

During Stage 1 of the training in the months of October and November the academic team worked towards creating opportunities for the Training Consultants to observe each other. This was made possible by having the academic team and the co-ordinator stepping in to do some of the sessions to allow the Training Consultants to observe each other. The focus was on post-observation discussions. It was felt necessary that the discussions following peer observations be developmental in nature and not an evaluation of the Training Consultants' skills. In order to facilitate this, no fixed criteria were handed over to the observers.

Training Consultants' feedback indicated that this was a positive and beneficial experience.

> *Peer observation is a two-way mirror – one learns about others, from others, and about oneself from others as well* (Training Consultant A)

> *Even when you observe the same person twice, you gain so much!* (Training Consultant B)

Another British Council Training Consultant summed up her experience:

> *The Peer Observation exercise was an enriching experience personally*

and professionally. I would like to recommend it as a tool for in-service Continuing Professional Development to be used within the British Council Teaching Centre network.

Some of the challenges from the point of view of the Training Consultants were:

- time constraints
- lack of fixed criteria for observation.

Challenges perceived by the academic team at the office included:

- scheduling peer-observations
- moving from evaluation of observee to post-observation developmental discussion.

The positive feedback from all the Training Consultants involved in the exercise inspired the academic team to think of other professional development activities during Stage 2 of the training programme. Some of the professional development activities the Training Consultants experienced were writing a case-study, being observed by a Senior Training Consultant or a Senior Teacher Trainer and having a post-observation developmental discussion, designing a session, action research and writing an article collaboratively with a Master Trainer (trainee) on one of the topics covered during the training.

Case study task

Training Consultants new to the project were asked to undertake a case study. The rationale was that in understanding one participant the Training Consultants would get a better idea of the educational context that the participant worked in and also recognise the training room as a group of individual participants.

One Training Consultant and co-author of this paper, Allwyn D'Costa, shares excerpts from his case study report here:

> *As a result of investigating this one case in detail, it made it clear that in order for a teacher training course to be effective, it is imperative that the real world needs of participants are addressed. It is quite important to value participants as individuals with experiences, and this must be factored in during lesson planning. Participants look up to the Training Consultants (TCs) for models of good teacher training practice. Therefore, it is necessary for TCs to exhibit skills, behaviour and values that they would like the trainees to have and perform when they conduct their own teacher training sessions.*

Some of the constraints apart from time experienced by other Training Consultants were:

- getting support from participants
- lack of continuity.

The choice of participants was also a challenge and there was a lively discussion during the conference session about how our personality influences this during the conference.

Action research task

For the action research, it was decided to focus on the area of micro-training. A substantial part of the course was to co-plan and micro-train the activities that were to be used in teacher training at block level. Micro-training is an opportunity for the Master Trainers from the state to try out various activities and also get some feedback. Training Consultants focused on various aspects of micro-training like Understanding 'Trainer Notes', co-planning and co-training and giving peer feedback. Advantages of action research are well documented (Burns 2010). The action research task expected the Training Consultants to reflect on their practice and then implement the changes they felt were necessary during the training sessions.

The action research project was conducted in Mysore and Dharwad, Karnataka between 2-6 September 2013 and 23-27 September 2013. This action research addressed issues of 78 Master Trainers on the project who faced challenges in regard to receiving feedback from and giving feedback to other Master Trainers due to instances of feedback being threatening, potentially arbitrary, vague or judgemental. The action research involved a cyclical process of background reading, collecting and analysing information and reflection of events during monitoring of peer observation and feedback.

This action research led to new insights in the area of research. It was found that it is necessary for a Training Consultant to give Master Trainers opportunities for peer observations which are not conducted with the intention to judge the teaching of others, but to encourage self-reflection and self-awareness about their own teaching, and focus more on opportunities to collectively clarify ideas and discuss suggestions drawn on one's own experiences. The objective of encouraging peer observation is to allow Master Trainers to focus on their own development, rather than on any presumed ability to develop the teaching of one's peers. Not only did this approach of peer observation help stimulate awareness of criteria, reflection and a questioning approach, it also made Master Trainers aware of good teaching practices and provided a forum to clarify any questions and sharing of best practices amongst the observers and the observed.

Feedback from Master Trainers at the end of the course indicated that they were most satisfied with the reflective approach adopted during peer observation and feedback. Feedback from Master Trainers on the evolved approach indicated that they were satisfied with this method of peer observation and feedback because the approach was based on the intention of providing solutions to real world problems faced by participants. Most solutions were drawn from their own experiences and the experiences of peers who faced similar challenges during cascade training in the past. More importantly, this made the whole process self-reflective and extremely participant-centred.

It was learnt that action research is a research which is of long duration and an ongoing one. The outcome may change with a change in needs and situation and therefore the results of one research may not be applicable in other scenarios.

Training Consultants reported:

> *Action Research is a very engaging way of doing professional development but also about learning more about research* (Training Consultant C)

> *Action Research motivates me to reach my own solutions and conclusions and this is far better than being presented with ideals which cannot be attained* (Training Consultant D)

> *I will continue to do Action Research. I have no doubt about the benefits of such a task for my teaching, although I should admit that it's not always easy to conduct it under time constraints* (Training Consultant E)

The action research task was initially set for a week but Training Consultants who were on the project for a second or third week kept doing action research throughout all the training weeks. During the Teacher Educator Conference 2014 some of the audience attending the talk were surprised that the Training Consultants could be so motivated that some carried on their research for three consecutive weeks of the training programme. Some decision makers thought that there should be action research workshops for all school teachers.

Collaborative article writing task

For the last week of the training it was decided to create a mentoring opportunity for the Training Consultants. They were supposed to choose one trainee from the group they were working with and help this trainee to conduct action research on a writing-related problem in their class. They were then supposed to write an article based on the trainee's report. The article writing activity was perhaps the most challenging in terms of collaboration as it could not be done face-to-face owing to geographical distances and had to be conducted via the telephone or via email. Another challenge was that since the collaboration depended on the Master Trainer trying out activities in their classes the time lines extended beyond the training duration.

The Training Consultants were supposed to choose their collaborators and then discuss and decide on a topic that was interesting for both of them from the topics covered during the training session. Different consultants followed different approaches; the most successful ones went equipped with ideas for classroom activities for various topics but involved the Master Trainers in the decision making by letting them choose a topic from a set that fitted their classroom challenges best.

Apart from the major task of mentoring a Master Trainer to do structured action research in class and submit a write-up about it, the task inspired Training

Consultants to research and read in depth about the particular topic they have chosen like spelling or punctuation. In order to be well informed to be able to support the Master Trainers, the Training Consultants read extensively about current practice, educational policies in various states, newspaper articles on reactions and opinions of educationists, parents and students about various changes in textbooks and educational systems. M who worked with R on 'spelling' said that the variety of methods of teaching spelling that she came across in the course of the research was 'mind-boggling'. She also complimented her collaborator R on her dedication to explore the various activities in class despite time constraints.

Another Training Consultant, felt that collaborating with a Master Trainer had helped her understand his classroom context better. She wrote "H (Master Trainer) believes strongly in his professional development and he said that as a result of KELTEP, he now keeps a Continuing Professional Development folder which contains his lesson plans and reflections". She continued, "It is encouraging other teachers in his district to research writing activities and try them out in their classrooms".

On their own learning after the article-writing activity, Training Consultants commented:

> *It is amazing how much research has gone into teaching spelling!*
> *I understand the challenges the Master Trainers face much better now!*

The enthusiasm and commitment with which British Council Training Consultants completed these CPD activities has inspired the academic team to keep this aspect in mind while planning other projects.

Implications and conclusions

The British Council Training Consultants are enthused and inspired to explore and reflect on their skills and practice further. For individual practitioners there are some activities that you can try out in your teaching or training sessions for your own professional development. If you are the head of a department or an institution, there are ideas here that can be used for encouraging collaboration between staff to encourage their professional development and motivate them to share their practice. In our case, the enthusiasm of our Training Consultants has rubbed off on the academic team and the team are now busy planning continuing professional development tasks as part of other state projects.

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Mobile embedded self-study materials for CPD: the use of English language for teachers (EL4T) in Bangladesh

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Abstract

English in Action (EIA) provides self-study materials (English Language for Teachers – EL4T) to teachers participating in its Continuing Professional Development programme. This study explored the suitability of EL4T for Self-Directed Learning (SDL) with reference to Garrison's (1997) model. To collect data, in-depth (qualitative) interviews were conducted with six primary school teachers from Dhaka Division. The findings suggest that among the three dimensions of Garrison's model, EL4T was the most suitable for 'motivation'. A comparatively weaker link was exhibited for 'self-management' and 'self-monitoring'.

Background

Self-Directed Learning (SDL) first became a viable and much researched concept in the1970s (Merriam 2001b). Knowles (1975: 18) described Self-Directed Learning (SDL) broadly as 'a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, select and implement learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes'.

During the late twentieth century, educationists began to distinguish 'adult education from other forms of education' and shifted the focus on the need for developing professional knowledge (Merriam 2004: 04). This resulted in the 'theory-building efforts' around self-directed learning (ibid.). Based in humanistic psychology, Knowles defined the term 'andragogy' as a concept that described individual adult learners as 'autonomous, free and growth oriented' (Knowles in Merriam 2001a: 07). Based on Knowles' work on andragogy, Tough (1967, 1971) and Houle (1961) carried out significant research studies on SDL and found that this kind of learning is widespread, occurs as part of an adult's everyday life, and does not depend on formal instruction despite being systematic (Tough and Houle in Merriam ibid.: 08). Learning in the self-directed mode thus seemed to have various goals.

Since the inception of SDL a number of models of this concept have been introduced (e.g. Brockett and Hiemstra 1991; Candy 1991; Garrison 1997). For

this study we considered Garrison's (2007) model, which in addition to being more recent is considered to be a comprehensive choice among the others (Song and Hill 2007). This model articulates SDL through three overlapping dimensions i.e. self-management (task control), self-monitoring (cognitive responsibility), and motivation (entering and task). Among these, self-management involves task control and management of learning resources and support. According to Garrison, this means learners taking control of the learning context to reach their learning objectives. He further explained that this does not mean learner independence but collaboration with people from the same context.

The second dimension, i.e. self-monitoring, addresses cognitive and metacognitive processes where learners are responsible for critical reflection and collaborative confirmation. Successful self-monitoring entails integrating new and existing knowledge structures in a meaningful manner and meeting learning goals. However, it is influenced by the context of the educational transaction and dependent upon both internal and external feedback.

Motivation is depicted as the third dimension in Garrison's model. In order to understand the salient role motivation plays in SDL, two distinguishable facets of motivation need to be focused on: the process of deciding to participate (entering motivation), and the effort required to stay on the task and persist (task motivation). Commitment to a particular goal and the intent to act is considered as entering motivation whereas the tendency to focus on and persist in learning activities and goals is task motivation.

Keeping Garrison's model at the focal point, this study explores how the self-study materials called English Language for Teachers (referred to as EL4T henceforth) provided by English in Action (EIA) are contributing to teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Before discussing the research let us give a brief introduction to EIA and its EL4T materials.

English in Action (EIA) and EL4T resources

English in Action (EIA) is a nine-year English language education programme implemented through a partnership between the UK Government and the Government of Bangladesh. The goal of EIA is to contribute to the economic growth of Bangladesh by providing English language as a tool for better access to the world economy. EIA works to reach 25 million primary and secondary students and adult learners through communicative language learning techniques and use of ICT, textbooks and supplementary materials in an innovative way. In schools, EIA supports teachers for their professional development by providing them with audio-visual and print-based materials. EIA also provides audio resources for students to be used in the classrooms. All EIA teachers' and students' materials are closely linked with the English for Today textbook, making the lessons more interesting and engaging. As of 2014, EIA has already reached 12,500 teachers.

EIA in the role of educating teachers has taken into account the importance of enhancing teachers' capacity for taking charge of their own learning. Through

its developmental research from 2011 to 2014 the project has taken effective measures to track 'teacher's professional journey' (Power and Shrestha 2010). The programme has also been vigilant in recognising the need for a context-sensitive pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu 2001), the need for updating teacher's professional knowledge and skills as they face new challenges resulting from changes in the curriculum (Merriam 2001b). In response to the contextual needs of teachers in Bangladesh, EIA's EL4T helps teachers 'develop a professional toolkit of resources, knowledge, strategies and relationships' that they can draw upon to enact more effective teaching practices in their classroom (Power and Shrestha op.cit.).

EIA has developed two sets of resources in the EIA Primary Teaching and Learning Programme and the EIA Secondary Teaching and Learning Programme. These resources have been designed for teachers to engage in independent study for two hours per week over three ten-week periods, so each programme comprises 30 study units or lessons. Although primarily intended as a self-study course, the materials have been made suitable for use in group settings. Brief, additional guidance on using the materials in such settings has also been developed. The learning activities are interactive in nature, and are therefore suitable for use by pairs of learners working together (e.g. two teachers in the same school). This maximizes their potential to learn individually as well as in groups.

Methodology

With the advancement of theory and practice, educational researchers now have a range of approaches that can be utilized to conduct a study producing either quantitative or qualitative data. The selection of approach largely depends on the phenomena being studied as different approaches contain their own set of assumptions about the nature of the physical world and the kind of data that can be produced to increase knowledge about the world (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007; Denscombe 2010). The knowledge base of the researchers and the availability of resources also play a crucial role in determining approaches (Gay and Airasian 2000). Keeping in mind the focal issue of this study, our expertise and the resources that we have, we adopted a qualitative methodology for this research. Following the characteristics Denzin and Lincoln (2005) ascribe to qualitative researchers, we studied the use of EL4T in a natural setting, attempting to make sense of these phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

The sample for this research included six primary school teachers from Dhaka Division of Bangladesh who were selected through convenience sampling (Cohen, Manion and Morrison op. cit.: 114) from three different Upazilas (namely: Sutrapur, Nawabganj and Kishorganj Sadar). A semi-structured interview was developed based on the three areas of Garrison's (op. cit) model that was administered to the teachers individually. The first draft interview schedule was piloted on two teachers (not part of the final sample) and revised accordingly. The final interview consisted of twenty questions and a number of probes covering the three areas of SDL, i.e. self-management, self-monitoring and motivation. Teachers' responses

were recorded verbatim and analysed thematically. We heeded Creswell's (2007) advice to analyse the data inductively to establish patterns and themes, and the presentation of findings that follows includes the voice of the participants, our reflections, and a description and interpretation of the issue under consideration.

Like all qualitative research, this study was conducted with a limited sample and its findings cannot be generalized to a wider population. While conducting this study we followed the ethical guidelines delineated by BERA (2011).

Findings and discussion

In this section we are going to present the findings from the semi-structured interviews under three sub-headings that reflect the three areas of Garrison's model.

Self-management

This dimension is related to the enactment of learning goals and the management of learning resources and support (Garrison op. cit.). In our discussions with teachers about their self-management with EL4T, three major themes were identified. The first one combines areas related to process and materials. Respondents suggested that they are given choice of proactively carrying out the learning process, resources are available, and approaches suggested.

> *Core trainers and teacher facilitators advise us to use the EL4T* (Male teacher from Kishorganj)

> *We are encouraged by the teacher facilitators to use EL4T for our self-development. They inspire us to use the audios and the wordbook at our own convenience to learn English.* (Female teacher from Nawabganj)

> *[When we want to use EL4T] we take our mobile phone and our workbook. Then we play audio and practise with these.* (Female teacher from Sutrapur)

Teachers felt that EL4T is discrete enough to be used in different situations, and flexible pacing can also be accommodated for their learning. They felt this was a positive feature of these materials.

> *I can use EL4T in the school when I do not have any classes. I can use it in the teachers' room, I can listen to the audios even while travelling to or back from the school.* (Female teacher from Kishorganj)

> *I can use the EL4T in my own time. No one gives me pressure to do it. I can carry on in my own pace.* (Male teacher from Nawabganj)

In Garrison's (op. cit.: 22) view, self-management of the learning process facilitates and energizes meaningful and continuous learning when learners are given the choice to proactively carry out the learning process, when material resources are available, approaches suggested, flexible pacing accommodated, and questioning

and feedback provided as needed. Teachers' opinions suggest that most of these criteria are fulfilled by EL4T except for the questioning and feedback one. Limitations in questioning and feedback could be linked to another theme that emerged from the teachers' interviews.

Though the teachers appreciated the freedom offered by the existing design of EL4T, they also voiced the need for direction and some set standards.

> *It would have been better if there were more help from the teacher facilitators. We discuss EL4T during the cluster meetings but it is not extensive, more direction would be helpful. If there were any set standards to compare against, that would be helpful as well.* (Male teacher from Kishorganj)

We could interpret the first issue raised by teachers, i.e. their need for direction, as something that could be helped through collaboration with peers. Teachers' concern over this can be regarded as an enactment of how Garrison (op. cit.) opines that learner's control does not mean independence, but collaboration with other people within the context. The second issue of seeking standards is however beyond the model under discussion.

Self-monitoring

In EIA teachers are encouraged to reflect on their practice with EL4T in accordance with their learning tasks and goals. Some of the respondents were found to set specific achievable goals. However, in many cases responses suggest that they have general goals but no specific targets for improvement.

> *I want to use more English in my teaching learning and in my daily life.* (Female teacher from Kishorganj)

> *I want to become a good language teacher.* (Female teacher from Nawabganj)

> *I want to open an English teaching academy.* (Male teacher from Kishorganj)

Garrison (op. cit.) suggests that to self-monitor the learning process is to ensure that new and existing knowledge structures are integrated in a meaningful manner and learning goals are being met. He further explains that responsibility for self-monitoring reflects a commitment and obligation to construct meaning through critical reflection and collaborative confirmation. Though teachers' responses suggest presence of goal setting, nothing in the data suggested that teachers did critical reflection on their learning.

Moreover, teachers' responses suggest that there is a lack of collaboration among them even though the design of the EIA programme ensures peer support at the school level.

> *Sometimes I collaborate with my peers in studying English with help of EL4T. But it's not regular. It could be helpful if I had some way of working with other interested teachers from the vicinity out of the cluster meetings.* (Male teacher from Sutrapur)

Research evidence also suggests that collaborative control results in more effective self-monitoring and therefore improved performance (Butler and Winne 1995).

Motivation

EIA shares success stories as well as the achievement of the project and its impact in the classroom and on the life of the practitioners. Participants of the study suggest that these encourage them to use EL4T for English learning.

> *Our teacher facilitator gives us examples on how learning English could be life changing. I also felt that being better in English would help me perform my role (as an English teacher) better and help me in other ways. So I started using EL4T.* (Male teacher from Sutrapur)

The respondents perceived EL4T to be helpful in developing their English skills. That encouraged them to start learning through it.

> *I started EL4T for learning English more and more because I think it is very helpful to develop myself to speak English easily.* (Male teacher from Kishorganj)

The factors mentioned above can be regarded as the entering motivation for EL4T. Garrison's model emphasizes the importance of entering motivation as this directly influences the effort expended on learning tasks. This is the 'motivational reserve or fuel' that the learners possess when initiating learning experience (Garrison op. cit.: 27).

According to the respondents, once they start using EL4T they continue as they feel more confident professionally and socially. In addition, they also seem to draw motivation from the fact that their repertoire of usable English is enriched through EL4T.

> *Learning English through EL4T has boosted my confidence and I can now easily use English in my classroom. This is very encouraging.* (Female teacher from Kishorganj)

> *Earlier, I used very simple English. After using EL4T I think I can communicate with any person in English. I am able to use and understand complex English now.* (Male teacher from Nawabgonj)

Another factor that contributes to teachers continuing to use EL4T is that it is easy, effective and helpful.

> *EL4T is easily understandable and it is quite simple to navigate through.*
> (Female teacher from Sutrapur)

These factors can be considered as the task motivation i.e. the tendency to focus on and persist in learning activities and goals. We can consider the respondents as becoming active learners, which should result in directing and sustaining motivation.

Conclusion

As discussed above, among the three dimensions of Garrison's model EL4T is very much on par with 'motivation'. A comparatively weaker link was exhibited for 'self-management' and 'self-monitoring'. Questioning and feedback – a key component of self-management – is not focused on in teachers' current practices. Collaboration among peers could be strengthened to reinforce this component. This could also be helpful for setting up standards and role models for EL4T use. Overall, better collaboration among the peer teachers within school could improve the utilization of EL4T for SDL. Critical reflection is the key component that seems to be underemphasized with regard to the self-monitoring dimension. Teachers could be encouraged to use a journal to reflect on their learning through EL4T to help them self-monitor.

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'The Jamaican Fragment': using video to add a new dimension to the lesson

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Abstract

This paper discusses teacher motivation through the use of technology. Video is one of the resources that provide audio-visual input to children, engages them in active learning, and motivates teachers to use technology in the classroom for effective learning. The paper mainly focuses on a video film that was prepared on the text 'The Jamaican Fragment' in the Grade VIII English textbook being used in government schools in Karnataka. The impact of the video on the teaching-learning processes in the classroom was analysed and presented in this paper. It was found that the video helps teachers create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom and makes the teaching-learning process a pleasurable experience. As a result of the video, students had ample opportunities in the classroom to use various reading strategies such as predicting, summarizing, visualizing and questioning, and also take part in activities such as language games, story building, miming and dramatization of the lesson. The video thus helped teachers in designing interesting tasks and activities to enhance the learning capabilities of second language learners.

The video has also been used as a teacher professional development tool in teacher education courses. This has helped teachers gain insights into classroom management skills, teacher talk and student talk time, and formative assessment procedures. The video has also had a positive impact on teacher cognition and teacher preparedness, and has made a positive difference in their professional lives.

Introduction

It is important to develop a package of teaching-learning materials for classroom use in order to engage children in active learning. As stated in the position paper on 'Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbooks' of the National Curriculum Framework (2005), what is needed in current educational practices is not a single textbook but a package of teaching-learning materials. It is felt that a textbook should become a part of this package and not the only teaching-learning material.

Against this backdrop, the Department of Education, Karnataka – specifically the Directorate of State Educational Research and Training (DSERT), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Karnataka Textbook Society – has developed a package of audio-visual materials to enhance the learning capabilities of children studying in government schools in Karnataka. As far as English as a second language is

concerned, in addition to textbooks and workbooks, radio lessons as well as video films have been produced to provide rich exposure to the language and develop the linguistic and communication skills of learners.

Why videos?

A teacher has to use a variety of teaching-learning materials in the classroom, especially to teach a second language like English, as it is challenging for him/her to sustain learner motivation for one full academic year using a single textbook. Textbook lessons might sometimes cause boredom to learners due to the sameness or repetitiveness of lessons and activities (Chou 2010). In such a context, audio and video resources will help sustain learner motivation. Also, teaching and learning in many schools is reduced to rote memorization of questions and answers from the textbook. Resources like the video will help teachers to design many different activities and make teaching and learning more effective, interactive and meaningful.

Video is a powerful medium in today's world. It offers a multi-sensory experience. It is a wonderful combination of visual, audio and written information. Also, as videos provide rich audio-visual input to children and motivate teachers to use technology in the classroom for effective teaching and learning, they can be exploited as a potential educational tool in schools.

The background and the process

The videos developed by DSERT, Karnataka based on the new textbooks employ powerful visual techniques to help children understand the lessons better. The process of video production involved the following steps:

- A two-day workshop was conducted with practising teachers to identify the difficult units/areas (hard spots) in the textbook.
- Based on teacher inputs, a few lessons were chosen for producing video films. Expert teachers were involved in writing the objectives for these films. This was done in a three-day workshop where the teachers prepared the scope of the film and suggested activities for the video film (see Appendix 1).
- Using the objectives, scope and the suggested activities as the base, scripts for the films were written by ELT experts.
- Video production was handled by well-known film directors and documentary film makers.
- In addition to the films, a teacher's handbook was prepared by expert teachers at a workshop. The handbook provides a brief summary of the film and a few pre- as well as post-telecast activities.

Presently, videos on Grade VIII lessons are being telecast in selected schools of Karnataka (Bangalore Rural, Chamarajanagara and Gulbarga districts) where EDUSAT facilities are available.

'The Jamaican Fragment' was one of the lessons identified as difficult for

classroom transaction by the teachers. The opening paragraphs of the lesson are given below:

> *Every day I walk a half mile from my home to the rail track lines in the morning, and from the lines to my home in the evening. The walk is pleasant. You can see on either side red and green-roofed bungalows, green lawns and gardens. The exercise is good for me. And now and then, I learn something from a little incident.*
>
> *One morning, about half way between my front gate and the rail track, I noticed two boys playing in the garden of the more modest cottages. They were both very little boys, one was four years old perhaps, the other five. The bigger of the two was a sturdy youngster, very dark, with a mat of coarse hair on his head and coal-black eyes. He was definitely a little Jamaican – a strong little Jamaican. The other little fellow was smaller, but also sturdy. He was white, with hazel eyes and light-brown hair. Both were dressed in blue shirts and khaki pants. They wore no shoes and their feet were muddy. They were not conscious of my standing there, watching them: they played on. The game, if it could be called a game, was not elaborate. The little white boy walked majestically up and down, and every now and then, shouted in a commanding tone at his bigger playmate. The little brown boy dragged on quietly behind him and did what he was told.*
> (English Second Language Textbook for Standard 8, 2012, pp. 30-31)

Teachers felt that a video film on this lesson would facilitate better comprehension of the text. Accordingly, a script was written and a film titled 'The Jamaican Fragment' was produced.

The script has been prepared keeping the principles of learning a second language in mind. The film has interesting warm-up and pre-, while- and post-reading activities. Students in the video try to locate Jamaica on the globe, gather information about Jamaica from the Internet and present them to the class. The following are some interesting facts students gathered from the Internet and presented to the class:

- Jamaica is an island country.
- It is situated in the Caribbean Sea.
- Christopher Columbus reached Jamaica in 1494.
- The Spanish occupied the country and ruled it for many years. Slavery was practised.
- Then the British took over (in 1655) and made it their colony. Slavery was abolished in 1838.
- Jamaica got independence on August 6, 1962.
- In Jamaica, the majority of the people are black.

The background information presented in the video helps students understand and appreciate the story better. Students are also involved in a number of other

activities such as constructing stories, making predictions and inferences, miming and dramatizing the text, asking questions in groups and answering them, writing a review of the story, and practising the pronunciation of past tense forms.

Making inferences and predictions is an important skill involved in reading. In the video on 'The Jamaican Fragment', students make intelligent guesses that go beyond the literal meaning of the text. They also use text clues and background knowledge to predict what will happen next in the story. A few examples, from the video, where students have to make inferences and predictions are given below:

1. **Facilitator**: Once there were two boys playing in a garden.

   Who do you think these boys were?

   What do you think they were playing in the garden?

2. **Facilitator**: The man went home and thought about it deeply. The next morning, both the boys were there in the garden again. What do you think happened next?

3. **Facilitator**: This time the black boy was giving commands while the little white boy did everything quietly. What commands do you think the dark boy gave the white boy?

Activities such as field visits, project work, group discussions, role plays and dramatization have been meaningfully incorporated into the video films. In these films, learners get ample opportunities to construct knowledge about the topic, use language for authentic purposes and also develop critical thinking skills. Attempts have been made to develop various reading strategies such as predicting, summarizing, visualizing, questioning, connecting and evaluating. As a post-reading activity, students were encouraged to write a review of the story. The format for writing the review was given to them (see Appendix 2).

Teachers can use these videos in the classroom to give students further opportunities to practise various language learning strategies in an engaging way. These videos have the potential to be used as a learning tool, a teaching tool, as well as a professional teacher development tool.

Some of these videos were used in a State-level Master Resource Persons (MRPs) training programme for the new textbooks. The MRPs also used the same videos when they cascaded the training for high school teachers across the state. All these resulted in the classroom use of the videos with Grade VIII students.

Impact of the videos

A questionnaire (see Appendix 3) was conducted to explore further the usefulness of the videos and to gauge the impact of the videos on teachers and students. Questionnaires were distributed to 92 MRPs and 64 practising teachers. The questionnaire had two parts. In Part A, MRPs and teachers were asked to provide general information, and in Part B their opinions on the usefulness of the video were sought. The questions in Part B were related to the different activities, such

as silent reading, pronunciation exercise, writing task, miming, using the globe, using the Internet, student's prediction, asking questions and giving answers in groups, and dramatisation of the story, that were shown in the video. The respondents were asked to mark the activities they liked the most. There were also questions on the use of L1 in the video, and the teacher's ability to design similar tasks and activities and teach the lessons along similar lines.

The questionnaire survey and an informal interaction with the MRPs and teachers revealed that the video was useful in many ways. The video benefited the students in understanding concepts and the textbook content better. The MRPs and teachers were of the opinion that students developed greater interest in performing activities such as miming, dramatizing, asking and answering questions in groups because they had seen relevant demonstrations in the video.

Teachers felt that the video was useful to them as it offered a lot of insights into the designing of tasks and activities for teaching English. Teachers opined that the video helped them understand how to balance teacher talk time and student talk time, and learn the importance of developing learning strategies such as making predictions, reading a text silently, using reference materials and involving students in group discussions. The majority of teachers also stated that the video helped them in their planning and preparation.

A few teachers who showed the video before teaching the textbook lesson observed that students had difficulties in understanding the concept of an island (Jamaica is an island country), the concept of black and white people living together in Jamaica, and the blacks being the majority there. Students also had difficulty in the pronunciation of past tense markers.

A few teachers were of the opinion that the 30-minute video had some limitations. As there is a new assessment method in practice now in the state, teachers expected the entire lesson to be taught incorporating elements of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE).

As far as the trainers (MRPs) were concerned, they observed that the video helped them in developing reflective skills among teachers. In the training programme, teachers were encouraged to compare their classroom practices with the ones shown in the video. The trainers were able to facilitate a meaningful discussion on classroom processes, the teacher's role, the learner's role, classroom management skills, etc. In this way, the video enhanced the quality of the training sessions and reduced transmission loss that is typical of a cascaded training programme.

The following were some of the suggestions offered by teachers and trainers:

- As children studying in government schools lack the language resource, it may not be possible to perform such activities involving the whole class. In a class of 60-70 children, nearly 50% of them can't speak or read in English. The video should help teachers obtain practical ideas to support such students and evaluate their language ability.

- Current classroom practices that involve cooperative learning and peer support could be reflected in the video.
- More than a 'model lesson', there is a need for an 'experimental lesson' that shows classroom processes in detail and focuses on weaker children. Two concerns to be addressed in the video are getting such children to be involved in classroom activities and enhancing their language skills.

In sum, video materials play a vital role in teaching and learning English as there is a scarcity of qualified teachers to teach English in schools. These supplementary resources help teachers in making their classrooms interesting, lively and interactive. However, these resources are not easily accessible to teachers and learners in the state. The Department of Education should make efforts to provide easy and wide access to such useful technological resources. Also, it is necessary to maintain high standards and quality in the preparation and presentation of such materials. Making the best use of these resources and providing children with access to quality education rests in the hands of teachers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: A broad framework for the production of the video film

1	Class:	Subject:
2	Name of the textbook lesson	
3	Title of the video film	
4	Objectives of the lesson	
5	Objectives of the video film	
6	Scope of the film	
7	A brief description of the film	
8	Suggested activities for the film	

Appendix 2: Format for writing a review

Title of the story	
Author	
Characters	
A brief summary	
What I like best in this story	
How I rate this story (Give stars from 1 to 5 where 1 is the lowest score and 5 the highest)	

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

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Questionnaire on the use of video

Dear Colleague

This questionnaire seeks to examine the usefulness of the video 'The Jamaican Fragment' for teaching-learning purposes. Please complete both parts of the questionnaire.

Part A

Name:

Gender: Male/Female

Experience in teaching: Less than 5 years/5 to 10 years/more than 10 years

Address for Communication:

Part B

Please put a tick mark (✓) against the chosen response.

1. How useful is this video for teaching the given lesson?

    Very useful ☐   Useful ☐   Not useful ☐

2. Would you like to show this video to your students?

    Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

---

3. Which part of the video did you like the best?
   Silent reading ☐
   Pronunciation exercise ☐
   Writing task ☐
   Miming ☐
   Using the globe ☐
   Using the Internet ☐
   Student's prediction ☐
   Asking questions and giving answers in groups ☐
   Video clippings of the drama ☐

   Any other (please specify) ....

4. What is your opinion on the use of L1 in the video?

   Necessary ☐   Not necessary ☐   Necessary to some extent ☐

5. What else would you like to be included in the video?

6. Will you be able to design similar activities for other lessons?

   Yes ☐   No ☐   To some extent ☐

7. Will you be able to teach a lesson like this?

   Yes ☐   No ☐   To some extent ☐

8. Any other comments/suggestions on the video?

Theme two

Learning from experience

Critical reflection for Continuing Professional Development: using the SOAP strategy to analyse pedagogical experience

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Abstract

Critical reflection is the analysis of personal experience to enhance learning and improve future professional behaviour and outcomes. The process and practice of critical reflection goes beyond a mere recording of experience. Doing critical reflection involves following a systematic procedure to revisit classroom practice, analyse the experience, draw inferences from the learning, and planning a revised procedure based on the learning achieved. One effective model of critical reflection is the SOAP procedure (Subjective/Objective/Analysis/Planning) that makes practitioners analyse their experience by revisiting it critically and referring it to research in the field before planning the next step. Critical reflection thus helps professionals interrogate their pedagogical practices through objective procedures, leading to healthier classroom interaction and continuous professional development.

Introduction: critical reflection

Critical reflection is the recording and analysis of experience to enhance learning and improve future professional behaviour and outcomes. The act of critical reflection includes reliving an experience, analysing it and making hypotheses from the experience to apply to future situations. Thus critical reflection is not an unconscious or subconscious activity; it requires self-awareness and meta-cognitive skills. The act of critical reflection, in short, transforms a practitioner from a *participant* to an *observer* and *critic*.

According to Larrivee (2000), "Unless teachers develop the practice of critical reflection, they stay trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations. Approaching teaching as a reflective practitioner involves fusing personal beliefs and values into a professional identity" (Larrivee, 2000: 293). Schon (1983) sees the reflective practitioner as one who is willing to challenge self-evident 'truths', seek and take feedback and use it for professional development.

Critical reflection is a cyclical process: as each plan evolved at the end of one procedure is transacted in the classroom, the experience serves as content for the next round. Reflective practices thus become *embedded* into the pedagogical

master plan, drawing sustenance from all its organs – the materials, methodology, learner behaviour, the evaluation system and teacher perspective.

Models of reflection

Critical reflection as a pedagogical exercise is not a new idea; the literature on educational practices report on different models of reflective activities, the most popular of which include:

- Bloom's taxonomy (1956): Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analysing, Evaluating, Creating
- David Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (1976): Concrete experience, Observation and reflection, Formation of abstract concepts, Testing in new situations
- Gibb's reflective cycle (1988): Description, Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusion, Action Plan

The SOAP strategy

The **SOAP** strategy (Aronson et al. 2012) is a model of reflection developed at the University of California, San Francisco as part of the Learning from Experience as a Professional (LEaP) guidelines. Using the SOAP strategy involves the following steps:

1. exploring one's *subjective* (S) perspective of all facets of the experience in terms of the context, the content and the pedagogical strategies – i.e. one's thoughts, feelings and perception of the event;
2. incorporating *objective* (O) data on the experience through feedback, information and new learning from others (colleagues, available literature) and additional research;
3. *assessment* (A) of the experience through analysis of subjective and objective reflection, and synthesis of the learning obtained so that it leads to new understanding and more focused learning goals;
4. *planning* (P) of future professional action (classroom practice, networking, reading, research, etc.) based on the learning outcomes obtained through assessment, by evolving an action plan that is specific, detailed, achievable and measureable.

The significant departure of this strategy from other models of (critical) reflection is that the process of reflection does not stop at analysing and learning from one's personal experience alone. The SOAP strategy includes inputs from others – by referring one's experience to the available literature, others' experiences and observations, and similar forms of objective data.

Setting up criteria for reflection

As a pedagogical practice in English language teaching, critical reflection needs to be more than an anecdotal reliving of personal experience. To enable critical

reflection to become a *systematic* and *measureable* process of inquiry, a set of criteria based on the following five broad aspects can be evolved:

- Lesson objectives
- Teaching resources, i.e. the materials and activities used
- Methodology
- Classroom management
- Use of English (i.e. the amount, frequency and purpose for which English is used in the class by the teacher, and its comparison with students' use of English).

Following the SOAP procedure

Each stage of the SOAP procedure includes a careful and connected series of steps to understand and learn from the pedagogical experience. Below are the reflective activities for each stage.

Stage 1: Subjective (narration)
This includes:

- describing *what* happened: the events, one's thoughts and feelings (content)
- describing *how* it happened: how one acted, how students reacted, what went well, what didn't (pedagogical process)
- discussing *why* it happened: what were one's assumptions, what were the students' assumptions, how did the physical/linguistic/social environment contribute to it (context)

By revisiting each part of the experience, the reflective practitioner gains a perspective that builds on hindsight and enables the practitioner to see the event from a psychological distance. The advantage of subjective reflection is that it enables the reflective practitioner to momentarily suspend their emotions – *de-emotionalize* pedagogical experience and discover nuances of the experience that they may have missed as a participant.

Stage 2: Objective interpretation
This involves reconsidering the experience and identifying key issues of the event:

- by eliciting opinions, perspectives and feedback from other professionals (colleagues/peers)
- by consulting objective data from the literature.

By referring to research in the field, to other people's experiences and to theories evolved from such practices, the practitioner obtains multiple perspectives that can help them draw informed insights into their own experience.

Stage 3: Assessment
This involves:

- *analysing* the data gathered from subjective experience and objective inputs
- *synthesizing* the learning obtained
- *identifying* the strengths and weaknesses of the experience reflected upon, and
- *relating* this experience to past experiences to identify patterns (i.e. '*Have I done this before?/Do I always do this?*') and challenges ('*How can I do this differently?*').

By situating the lived experience in their past behaviour and practices, the practitioner understands their practice in its *context* – i.e. the physical, psychological and cultural beliefs, behaviours and actions; past and present; one's own and others' – that collectively influence one's classroom pedagogy.

Stage 4: Plan
In this final stage of the SOAP procedure, the practitioner has to plan the future course of pedagogical action. This can be done by making a SMART plan that includes:

- <u>s</u>pecific next steps (based on the predetermined criteria)
- <u>m</u>easurable goals (changing particular aspects of behaviour, teaching resources or methodology by locating them along a continuum e.g. Never–Sometimes–Often–Usually–Always)
- <u>a</u>ttainable objectives (immediate, doable objectives rather than long-standing general aims)
- <u>r</u>elevant action (that which has immediate positive consequences for students) and
- <u>t</u>imely intervention (putting the plan in action in the next class/intervention/discussion rather than waiting for a 'right' time).

Statements about teacher beliefs

An important aspect of critical reflection is accounting for the practitioner's existing beliefs about teaching and learning. Since reflection is a conscious activity and is based on a willingness to improve teaching practice, the practitioner needs to be able to question their basic assumptions about what constitutes good or effective teaching and learning. If such beliefs are not addressed at the beginning of Stage 1 (subjective narration), the purpose of carrying out critical reflection may be defeated.

Typical opinions of teachers on teaching English may range from general issues such as classroom management or specific beliefs such as whether or not grammar rules should be taught. Below is a sample of teacher beliefs that may inform a reflective exercise.

1. Good teaching involves explaining the lesson to students; they would otherwise not understand what it contains.

2. Pair and group work sounds like a good idea; but try it in your own classroom – it's noisy, messy and unmanageable.

3. No matter what people say, I still feel formal grammar teaching is important; if we only focus on fluency, chances are that students will always speak and write ungrammatically.

4. My students know so little English that I need to translate every sentence, every word into the local language – the syllabus has to be finished – where's the time for special language activities?

5. Frankly, my own English is not very good so it is better to use the local language to teach English – at least I can make them understand the lesson.

Such beliefs affect classroom pedagogy and, in turn, the articulation of the experience during the reflective exercise. For example, a teacher who believes that an English lesson needs to be translated word for word to the students may not see the relation between this and the students' inability to speak English with confidence. She may then not think it necessary to mention it during subjective narration (Stage 1), and the issue may remain unresolved during the next three stages. A plan for future action may then exclude activities for students' speaking practice.

The language of reflective questions

As important as the procedure of reflection and the accounting for teacher beliefs and assumptions is the *articulation* of the experience. The language in which the practitioner expresses their pedagogical experience differentiates critical reflection from anecdotal storytelling. Also, being able to translate one's thoughts into specific pedagogical comments lays the ground for a specific and achievable plan of future action. For example, vague generalizations such as 'I needed to give proper instructions' have less scope for intervention than specific comments such as:

> *The pair work activity took more time than planned – I should have given instructions before giving away the worksheets and made students repeat instructions; this would have made students do it quickly.*

The value of springboard questions

Articulating a pedagogical experience includes asking *springboard* questions that elicit and trigger focused reflection on a lesson. These springboards stem from the criteria based on classroom aspects and make the narrative inquiry specific and focused rather than an arbitrary plucking of points off the anecdotal conveyor belt.

Here is an example of springboard questions based on the criterion 'Use of English':

For what purpose(s) did I use English? When? (Subjective)
↓
How much English did you use? When? (Objective)
↓

How much of English/mother tongue should a teacher use? (Analysis)

These springboards will then lead to informed decisions in the Planning stage:

> *In my next class I will use English, and not Hindi, for giving task instructions, reading aloud and giving feedback.*

There are several other advantages of using springboard questions:

- They help make the reflective exercise a learning-directed pedagogic activity;
- They allow the practitioner to plan specific activities for a future lesson;
- They provide the practitioner with a measurable tool to map their progress through the stages;
- They help externalize the reflective experience so that the issues raised no longer remain personal shortcomings, but generalizable pedagogic learning points.

Demonstration of a SOAP cycle

Below is an example of following the SOAP procedure. The criterion informing the reflective experience here is 'managing group work'. The SOAP cycle for this reflective exercise begins with subjective narration of the experience (Stage 1), which considers the *what*, *how* and *why* of the experience.

1. *First I divided the students into groups and then I told them which page to open. There was a lot of chaotic movement, scraping of chairs and shouting of group numbers. I got nervous and annoyed when the students began to make a lot of noise.* (**What happened; Springboard question: What did I do?**)
2. *When I divided the students into groups, it became difficult for me to make myself heard over that noise. It took me a lot of time to quieten them and give my instructions for the activity. I had not demonstrated how to form the groups.* (**How it happened; Springboard: How did it happen?**)
3. *I divided the students into groups because I feel I needed to organize them before I made them start working. I did not anticipate the chaos – maybe there was a problem in my planning, or maybe it was a problem with class management.* (**Why it happened; Springboard: Why did I do this?**)

During Stage 2, objective inputs from oneself, colleagues, friends and other experienced people are taken, and the experience is also referred to the available literature in the field.

1. *You divided the students into groups <u>before</u> you gave instructions; that may have been why there was so much noise.* (**Input from others; Springboard: What did you do that led to the problem?**)
2. Ideas for managing group work (**Input from relevant literature; Springboard: What have other people reported about this experience?**)

During Stage 3, the experience and inputs are analysed, leading to a synthesis of learning. Strengths, weaknesses, patterns (emerging from past behaviour and beliefs) and challenges are identified at this stage.

1. Why did it happen – was this your first time organizing group work? Were there many more students in the class than your expectation? Did you anticipate this? Did you set a time limit? (**analysing experience and inputs; synthesizing learning**)
2. You realized what was wrong, you managed to quieten the class, you exercised control. (**identifying strengths**)
3. You did not plan ahead, you did not discuss with peers, you may not have read about strategies, you do not know which activities to choose for group work. (**identifying weaknesses**)
4. Has this happened before? How did you handle it the last time? Have you seen others doing it – did you feel you would do it better yourself? Do you usually take up academic challenges? (**identifying patterns and challenges**)

During Stage 4, the analyses and synthesis are translated into doable actions for the immediate future.

1. I will make one or two students repeat my instructions.
2. I will use a simpler way to form groups – I will try making the first bench turn towards the second, the third towards the fourth, and so on.
3. I will make them start work only after all groups are seated and ready.

Tips for effective reflection

Critical reflection on one's practice using the SOAP strategy is a very useful exercise for continuous professional development. However, it is easy to let a purportedly critical reflective exercise slip into storytelling. Here are a few tips that help make critical reflection a purposeful learning tool:

- Picking an experience that evoked a strong emotional reaction in the practitioner
- In subjective analysis, avoiding making excuses for one's actions and not indulging in self-pity or self-congratulation
- Adopting an attitude of suspended judgement and not second-guessing, until one gets more data
- Following every step of this in a cyclic process, because each step builds from the previous
- Working with an open mind to be able to accept a new perspective and a new set of skills or attitudes
- Remembering that the aim of critical reflection is professional development, not writing a good narrative or advertising one's skills.

Conclusion

The act of interrogating pedagogical practice both as personal experience and as an objective, contextualized event (with feedback from others) is meant to help ELT practitioners learn how to synthesize their learning and evolve more effective pedagogical strategies for future use. As current practice shows, a holistic and experiential approach to pedagogy makes the teacher a better learner. Critical reflection provides teachers with a platform to engage with good practice through specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely interventions. It also helps make continuing professional development (CPD) a natural outcome of everyday pedagogical practices.

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Tasks as tools to trigger reflection in pre-service teachers

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Abstract

Systematic reflection is a pathway to professional development. But the capability to reflect on teaching practice does not develop naturally; neither is it automatically subject to growth. Hence the paper posits that pre-service preparation must sow the seeds of reflection and initiate the process of reflective practice for novices. It shows how tasks can be used to trigger reflection in a set of pre-service teachers. Four tasks related to critical moments in the classroom are used for the purpose. Trainees are encouraged to reflect on the action that they are likely to take at those moments. The following prompts are provided to help them reflect:

1. *What would I do? (Choice/decision)*
2. *Why would I do this? (Rationale)*
3. *How would I do this? (Process of implementing the decision)*
4. *What would I achieve by doing this? (Goal)*
5. *What could be the consequences of my choice/action? (Possible problems)*
6. *How would I handle them? (Troubleshooting)*
7. *What other options are available (instead of the one that I chose)?*

Findings reveal that tasks related to critical classroom moments have the potential to trigger reflection and thereby prepare pre-service teachers to face challenges in their future careers. Implications for teacher educators (e.g. issues that draw trainees' attention to techniques that cultivate and foster reflection) are discussed.

> *A reflection in a mirror is an exact replica of what is in front of it. Reflection in professional practice, however, gives back not what it is, but what might be, an improvement on the original.* (Biggs 1999: 6)

Introduction

To reflect means to look within to seek answers to queries, and this is true of teacher learning too. Reflection provides teachers an opportunity to understand their practice. It enables them to act in a 'deliberate and intentional fashion' rather than in a 'blind and impulsive' manner and helps them to monitor their own practice and change it according to what they hope to achieve (Dewey 1933). However, reflection does not always happen automatically. It is a skill that needs

to be cultivated early on in a teacher's career and there can be no better platform than a pre-service training programme to do so.

Aim

The paper demonstrates how tasks can be used to trigger reflection in a set of pre-service teachers.

Rationale

Teachers must continually reshape their knowledge of teaching and learning. Teacher education programmes are the platforms where such knowledge is developed initially. The knowledge and the skills so acquired in the initial teacher training settings become an essential part of their careers through reflective practice. Hence a study that demonstrates how reflection can be fostered.

Hypothesis

Using tasks that focus on critical classroom moments helps foster reflection in trainee teachers.

Review of literature

- Wlodarsky (2005) conducts a study on transforming teaching practice through critical reflection and dialogue. The aim is to examine what teacher beliefs, through the use of critical reflection and dialogue, facilitate classroom practices and ultimately develop teachers professionally.
- Rosaen et al. (2008) investigate the efficacy of videotapes in helping interns reflect on their teaching experiences in more complex ways than when they use memory-based written reflection.
- Clarke (1995) explores the applicability of Schon's notion of reflective practice for student-teachers in practicum settings with three aspects in focus: a) what do student-teachers reflect upon? b) what precipitates reflection? and c) what factors enhance or hinder reflection?
- Lee (2005) reviews the criteria for assessing reflective thinking and investigates how the process of reflective thinking develops in pre-service teachers in terms of the content as well as the depth of reflection. The study offers insights into how to measure the quality of reflective thinking and how to cultivate reflective practitioners.

Theoretical support

The paper is based on the following theoretical propositions:

- Reflective practice is an approach to professional growth that moves away from standard, prescriptive responses to situations. It focuses on the complexity, variability and uncertainty prevalent in the classroom and posits that problems cannot be solved by the simple application of technical solutions (Thompson 2002).

- A reflective teacher is flexible and is able to change lessons on the 'spur of the moment' in order that students benefit (Moore 2004).
- Reflection combined with practice links active theorizing and action. Reflective practice thus marks the difference between an expert teacher who is willing to learn and become a better teacher and a teacher who is only more experienced than a novice teacher (Burton 2009).

Methodology

Eight trainee teachers (TTs) enrolled on a course titled *The Second Language Classroom* (TSLC) – offered as part of the M.A TESL programme at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad – were the subjects of this study. Four tasks focusing on critical incidents in the classroom were used to trigger reflection. There was a discussion in class on how the trainees would act in these awkward situations. They were then encouraged to record their reflections in writing and share them with their peers in order to learn about more options possible in any given situation.

The following were the four critical incidents/moments:

1. *You expected an activity to take five minutes. It has taken twenty so far, and the Ss still seem to be very involved in it. There is something else you want to do before the lesson ends in ten minutes.*
2. *The next activity involves Ss working in groups of five. At the moment all the rows of desks (which take two students each) are facing the front of the class. They are movable, but it will take a few minutes of chaos to do it.*
3. *The students are working in groups of three. Two groups have finished the task you set them and are now sitting looking bored. The other groups still seem to have a long way to go before they finish.*
4. *A student says, 'I don't want to do this exercise.'*

The trainees were encouraged to reflect on the critical incidents above using the following prompts:

1. What would I do? (Choice/decision)
2. Why would I do this? (Rationale)
3. How would I do this? (Process of implementing the decision)
4. What would I achieve by doing this? (Goal)
5. What could be the consequences of my choice/action? (Possible problems)
6. How would I handle them? (Troubleshooting)
7. What other options are available (instead of the one that I chose)?

Data presentation and interpretation

The trainees offered an array of interesting responses to each of the critical incidents while displaying the ability to think critically and perceptively.

Critical incident 1

You expected an activity to take five minutes. It has taken twenty so far, and the Ss still seem to be very involved in it. There is something else you want to do before the lesson ends in ten minutes.

Reflections of TTs – a sample:

1. *What would I do?* (Choice/decision)

   I would set one last deadline and ask them to conclude.

2. *Why would I do this?* (Rationale)

   To save time for the next activity. I would do this because I want to accommodate as many activities as possible.

3. *How would I do this?* (Process of implementing the decision)

   I will ask students to complete it in 3 minutes, and if they are interested they can continue it at home or out of class time.

4. *What would I achieve by doing this?* (Goal)

   I would save a lot of time because it does not mean that when students are interested there is a lot of learning happening.

5. *What could be the consequences of my choice/action?* (Possible problems)

   Possible problems are: students might be annoyed because of my cutting the activity short; their motivation might be jeopardized; the next activity might not grab their attention.

6. *How would I handle them?* (Troubleshooting)

   I will make them realize that it is their decision to stop the activity; I will introduce the next activity in a more interesting, different way.

7. *What other options are available* (instead of the one that I chose)?

   Instead of stopping the activity I could continue to do it in class and ask them to reflect and collect information for the next activity.

Critical incident 2

The next activity involves Ss working in groups of five. At the moment, all the rows of desks (which take two students each) are facing the front of the class. They are movable, but it will take a few minutes of chaos to do it.

Reflections of TTs – a sample:

1. *What would I do?* (Choice/decision)

   I would take time to rearrange the desks to make the students sit in groups of five.

2. *Why would I do this?* (Rationale)

   The activity has been planned this way. Hence the time spent and the chaos would also have to be planned for, in advance.

3. *How would I do this?* (Process of implementing the decision)

    I would ask the students to move two/three desks so that they face each other, or in a semi-circular fashion.

4. *What would I achieve by doing this?* (Goal)

    I would successfully get the group members to interact with one another. There would be genuine exchange of information and the activity would progress smoothly.

5. *What could be the consequences of my choice/action?* (Possible problems)

    Possible loss of more time than I would have wanted; more chaos; the students (if younger) lose interest in the lesson and get into a quarrel. I might have to work harder to bring the class to order.

6. *How would I handle them?* (Troubleshooting)

    Giving clear instructions, asking one or two students to repeat my instructions – to see if they have really understood what has to be done – might ensure less chaos. Students get to see that they have to play an important and responsible role.

7. *What other options are available* (instead of the one that I chose)?

    If there is ample floor space available, I would ask the students to leave their desks and sit on the floor, in groups of five.

Critical incident 3

The students are working in groups of three. Two groups have finished the task you set them and are now sitting looking bored. The other groups still seem to have a long way to go before they finish.

Reflections of TTs – a sample:

1. *What would I do?* (Choice/decision)

    I would give these two groups extra tasks.

2. *Why would I do this?* (Rationale)

    To keep the learning process happening.

3. *How would I do this?* (Process of implementing the decision)

    By giving them extra work related to the work they are doing, by increasing the challenge or difficulty.

4. *What would I achieve by doing this?* (Goal)

    My class will run well, the learning process will have no distraction.

5. *What could be the consequences of my choice/action?* (Possible problems)

    Other groups may feel differently and jealous.

6. *How would I handle them?* (Troubleshooting)

    I would give the other group the same work as homework, if they cannot finish it in class.

7. *What other options are available* (instead of the one that I chose)?

    I will ask the two groups to re-evaluate their work.

Critical incident 4

A student says, 'I don't want to do this exercise.'

Reflections of TTs – a sample:

1. *What would I do?* (Choice/decision)

    Find out why s/he doesn't want to do the exercise.

2. *Why would I do this?* (Rationale)

    To determine what the issue is – whether it is a problem with the exercise or with the student's attitude.

3. *How would I do this?* (Process of implementing the decision)

    I would first finish giving my instructions to the rest of the class so that they can get on with the exercise and then I would take this student aside and ask him what the matter is.

4. *What would I achieve by doing this?* (Goal)

    I would succeed in inculcating in the students the belief that the teacher is approachable and respects their feelings, at the same time making them aware that they need to have a rationale for the stand they take in class.

5. *What could be the consequences of my choice/action?* (Possible problems)
    Students might feel more at ease in expressing their opinions in class, and refusing to do exercises might become a trend if the teacher appears to be excessively understanding and accommodating.

6. *How would I handle them?* (Troubleshooting)

    I would let them know that on the one hand they are most welcome to be frank about their opinions but on the other hand they should know that not all their demands will be met in class unless they have a convincing reason.

7. *What other options are available* (instead of the one that I chose)?

    I don't think there's any better option than actually talking to the student and finding out what the problem is.

How is reflection helpful?
An attempt was made to capture participant perceptions about the need for and the value of engaging in reflection. Given below are some of the trainee responses.

Response 1

This activity presents different problems that could occur in a classroom. As an aspiring teacher I have not dealt with these issues yet. However, through this reflective exercise I can mentally play out such scenarios and plan what I would do. As I am asked to provide a rationale for my remedy, I have to make sure that whatever I suggest is logical and attuned to my beliefs about learning and

teaching. Also by thinking of possible problems and troubleshooting, I can arrive at a list of ideas that I could make use of when I actually start teaching.

Response 2

Such reflections are extremely useful. They act as a think-aloud activity where the practitioner ends up talking to her/himself about the things s/he actually believes in. These reflections also help to make her/him realize how far s/he actually does the things s/he believes in, in class.

Response 3

These reflections were very helpful because I was able to imagine and use my previous experiences in school, as a student, to react to each situation. I think this helps me prepare a bit before actually going to teach in a real class. When I actually start teaching, I can ask the same questions and work my way around problems that might arise in a classroom.

Response 4

Yes, reflections of this kind are useful as they tend to channelize our thoughts, help us carefully consider the multitude of options, and choose an appropriate one based on the situation, time available, type of audience, etc. so as to make the session cordial, interactive and productive.

Response 5

I do think that reflections of this kind are most helpful. They will help teachers to anticipate impending incidents in a classroom and be prepared with necessary planning. Planning and evaluation after such incidents will give us strength to cope with students of different character and levels.

Response 6

I do believe reflections of this kind are helpful. It is human nature to stick to convenient ways and options in all walks of life. So it may not be rare for many teachers to stick to lesson plans and be less resilient when they are faced with all kinds of problematic situations in the classroom. I believe that having the forethought to ponder on possible "what if" situations in the classroom will help teachers to actually deal with real unforeseen problems in the classroom prudently and fairly.

Findings

- Critical incidents have the potential to trigger reflection.
- Reflection needs to be structured, at least in the initial stages of training.
- Such structuring helps in probing the issue from several perspectives.
- Trainees realize that for any incident there are several options available and that several factors influence the choice of an option.
- Trainees perceive reflection as a preparation for future practice.

Implications

- Pre-service training is the best platform for initiating and cultivating the culture of reflection.
- Trainees have to be made aware of the benefits of reflection.
- Positive attitudes towards reflection need to be inculcated for sustaining it in the long run.
- Other options such as Case Based Pedagogy (CBP) could be explored to foster reflection.

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Appendix

Reflection sheet

Dear Participant
Write your reflections about the critical incidents we discussed in class and share them with your peers. Mail a soft copy of your responses to your friends with a copy marked to me. The data you provide may be used later for research purposes. But rest assured that your identity will not be revealed when the information you record is used for research and documentation.

Best wishes

Part I

Personal Profile

Name:
Teaching experience (if any):
Contact no:

Part II

Given below are **four** classroom critical moments. Imagine that you are the teacher and reflect on the action that you are likely to take in that situation. Ask yourself the following questions.

1. What would I do? (Choice/decision)

2. Why would I do this? (Rationale)

3. How would I do this? (Process of implementing the decision)

4. What would I achieve by doing this? (Goal)

5. What could be the consequences of my choice/action? (Possible problems)

6. How would I handle them? (Troubleshooting)

7. What other options are available (instead of the one that I chose)?

Critical incident 1

You expected an activity to take five minutes. It has taken twenty so far, and the Ss still seem to be very involved in it. There is something else you want to do before the lesson ends in ten minutes.

1. What would I do? (Choice/decision)
2. Why would I do this? (Rationale)
3. How would I do this? (Process of implementing the decision)
4. What would I achieve by doing this? (Goal)
5. What could be the consequences of my choice/action? (Possible problems)
6. How would I handle them? (Troubleshooting)
7. What other options are available (instead of the one that I chose)?

Critical incident 2

The next activity involves Ss working in groups of five. At the moment, all the rows of desks (which take two students each) are facing the front of the class. They are movable, but it will take a few minutes of chaos to do it.

1. What would I do? (Choice/decision)
2. Why would I do this? (Rationale)
3. How would I do this? (Process of implementing the decision)
4. What would I achieve by doing this? (Goal)
5. What could be the consequences of my choice/action? (Possible problems)
6. How would I handle them? (Troubleshooting)
7. What other options are available (instead of the one that I chose)?

Critical incident 3

The students are working in groups of three. Two groups have finished the task you set them and are now sitting looking bored. The other groups still seem to have a long way to go before they finish.

1. What would I do? (Choice/decision)
2. Why would I do this? (Rationale)
3. How would I do this? (Process of implementing the decision)
4. What would I achieve by doing this? (Goal)
5. What could be the consequences of my choice/action? (Possible problems)
6. How would I handle them? (Troubleshooting)
7. What other options are available (instead of the one that I chose)?

Critical incident 4

A student says, 'I don't want to do this exercise.'

1. What would I do? (Choice/decision)

2. Why would I do this? (Rationale)
3. How would I do this? (Process of implementing the decision)
4. What would I achieve by doing this? (Goal)
5. What could be the consequences of my choice/action? (Possible problems
6. How would I handle them? (Troubleshooting)
7. What other options are available (instead of the one that I chose)?

Part III

Do you think reflections of this kind are useful/helpful? In what way(s)?

Using evaluation criteria to plan writing performance: a study of pre-service teachers of English

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of evaluation criteria as a scaffolding device to help adult ESL learners plan writing performance. Task-specific evaluation criteria were shared prior to writing. This made the learners engage in strategic planning at pre- and within-task performance stages. Learner statements on the nature of planning were collected through a post-task open-ended questionnaire. The responses showed that the learners used evaluation criteria to attend to task details and move from declarative to procedural knowledge of the use of criteria. At later stages, some of them also used criteria as a monitor to critically revise their work prior to submission. Hence, as expected, the findings of this exploratory study show that evaluation criteria help learners move through their zone of proximal development (ZPD) to a next higher level through a series of writing assignments as they begin to pay close attention to features of academic writing. The findings have implications for the ESL/EFL classroom: if teachers design, share and train learners to use evaluation criteria to plan their performance for what and how to write, then learners are likely to experience academic benefits.

Introduction

There is a multitude of research on the beneficial role of *planning* on task performance as it helps ESL/EFL learners to attend to task details and improve on either form (Ellis and Yuan 2005) or meaning (Bygate and Samuda 2005) or both (Sangarun 2005). The beneficial effects of planning are experienced because when learners get more time they can attend to task details. In addition, planning reduces the processing load by breaking the task down into smaller manageable bits. Generally planning is learner driven and most often it is the learners who come up with strategies to break a task into smaller bits to complete a task. But can learners be provided with a guideline to plan their performance? Can such guidelines be provided by sharing task-specific evaluation criteria?

As an attempt to answer these questions, we conducted a small-scale exploratory classroom-based study. We collected ESL learners' reports on the use of evaluation criteria to plan task performance. This was done to study the impact of learners' use of criteria, which till date has rarely been documented systematically.

This paper is organized in the following manner. We begin with a brief description of the role of planning in task performance along with some details on the use of

evaluation criteria for writing performance. Then we present details of the study-like research questions, subject profile, task design, findings and discussion. We conclude by making a few pedagogical suggestions to incorporate evaluation criteria as part of teaching writing.

Role of planning
Planning refers to conscious attention drawn to a task to fulfil a goal, namely, completing a task. For example in a writing task, like a picture description task, learners would need to know the following to complete the task successfully:

1. Which ideas should I write about?
2. What kind of vocabulary and sentence structures should I use to express those ideas?
3. How should I connect all the ideas in my text?

When learners are given a visual stimulus, it would direct their attention to the objects in the picture and they would need to figure out a relationship between the constituent parts of the picture to write a connected text. This activity would require them to engage in *strategic* planning (Ellis 2005) whereby they would have to attend to each of the three task components listed in (1-3) above. In doing so, they are likely to 'notice' information and orientate themselves to deciding how best to achieve the goal, here, describing the picture as a written connected piece of work. So, *strategic* planning for the task will make them more conscious about the ideas and the structural forms to be used in the task. In fact, research on the effect of planning on task performance has shown that learners pay attention to meaning and in some cases to form when given a chance to plan before main task execution. So, it is quite evident that noticing through planning positively impacts ESL/EFL learners' task performance. The nature of gain, however, may vary in different conditions and due to individual differences; and the gain can be anything from language to content to organization.

Research in the last two decades has shown that strategic planning works best when learners have the time to focus on task components and their proficiency levels are advanced enough to handle task complexity (Ortega 2005; Kawanchi 2005). Though there have been quite a few studies that have documented the *product* that emerges out of planning, very few studies have documented planning as a *process* or what learners do to plan their performance. One such study is by Ortega (ibid), where she documents learners' perceptions and strategies during planning through post-task interviews. The findings show that learner-driven focus on strategic planning initiates cognitive and socio-affective domains of thought processes.

We were also interested in finding out the *process* of planning in adult ESL learners, as this area has not received much attention. So our study was designed along the lines of Ortega's study. One added component in our study was that we incorporated evaluation criteria to aid learner planning. This we expected would generate strategic planning in adult ESL learners.

Role of evaluation criteria
In the context of assessment and pedagogy, evaluation criteria have been seen to serve two roles (Brown and Abeywickrama 2010). One role is to maintain uniform standards in scoring free responses (inter-rater reliability). The second role is to provide feedback to learners by placing them on different levels of performance across sub-features such as *content, language* and *organization.*

In this study, we posit a third role of evaluation criteria, namely its potential for being used by learners during task performance under an unpressured formative assessment situation. This role can be utilized if task-specific evaluation criteria are shared with learners prior to their task performance. It can transform evaluation criteria from a rating device to 'a scaffolding device' (Vygotsky 1978) and help learners plan their performance in a streamlined manner. It is likely to direct their attention towards the goal such as completing a written assignment following task requirements. Used over a period of time, it would help learners gradually become independent when they *apply* this knowledge to newer contexts of writing (Bloom as cited in Krathwohl 2002) and experience growth in writing skills.

The study
Whether ESL learners engage in strategic planning when given evaluation criteria formed the base of the present study. The learners who participated in the study were given task-specific analytical evaluation criteria at four levels of performance with a tripartite structure (*content-language-organization*); each criterion was fine-tuned to suit the needs of each task (see the Appendix for a sample task and criteria). It was expected that these evaluation criteria would serve as a scaffolding device to help learners plan their performance and direct their attention to noticing finer details about task requirements. Note that neither were the learners explicitly asked to use the criteria to plan performance nor was any monitoring done during the task completion phase to check whether they used the criteria and/or in what manner they had used the criteria. This was deemed as unnecessary as the tasks were part of formal assessment. We expected the learners to use the criteria and assumed that if they use evaluation criteria meaningfully, it would positively impact their task performance.

Research questions
The study attempted to address the following research questions:

1. Do ESL learners use evaluation criteria to plan task performance?
2. In what ways do the criteria help them plan?
3. Do they experience any change in their perception when using criteria across tasks over a period of time?

Subjects
Eleven adult ESL learners enrolled on a doctoral programme in an Indian university participated in the study. We did not conduct any proficiency test. Based on other writing samples it was concluded that all the learners were at an upper intermediate level of proficiency in English. There were six female and five male

participants and they were twenty-five to thirty-five years old. All of them had a minimum of fifteen years of exposure to English.

Task design
At the time of the study, the learners did a course on *Language Testing and Assessment* as part of their doctoral programme. In this course, a formative model of assessment was used with periodic assignments and an end-of-term project report and a term paper. For each assignment, the learners were provided with task-specific analytical evaluation criteria (refer to Appendix 1) that had descriptions of performance across three levels. The learners were given the criteria before they performed on each task. (The criteria were also used to evaluate their performance later.)

A free response questionnaire was used to tap learner reflections on the process of planning. The comments were collected after they had completed all the writing assignments on the course. The three questions in the questionnaire included to make the learners respond to use of evaluation criteria are given in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Questions on use of evaluation criteria during task performance

1. Do you think if task-specific evaluation criteria are given to students, it will have an impact on their written performance? What will the kind of impact be? Explain briefly with examples from experience on working on assignments in the LTA course or any other course where you may have used such criteria.

2. With every task prompt you were given evaluation criteria. How did you respond to it when you used it for the first time (in your presentation and first write-up on research use of language tests in your project)? By the end of the course did your response to using evaluation criteria to plan and write your assignments change (improve/left you confused…etc.)? If yes, then explain how.

3. Was it difficult to use the criteria to write your responses or did it make your job easier? State your opinion and briefly explain it.

Learner responses from such questions will provide us evidence of how learners plan and orientate themselves to meet the task requirements satisfactorily. If they do so successfully, then this procedure will have significant pedagogical implications for ESL/EFL teachers.

Findings and discussion
In this section we present the salient findings of the study.

1. *Do ESL learners use evaluation criteria to plan task performance?*

All the 11 learners reported that they had used evaluation criteria for all the writing tasks. They had used the criteria at two points: (a) pre-task planning and (b) within-task planning. So this affirms the first research question that ESL learners use evaluation criteria to plan task performance. The learners also reported that they had never used evaluation criteria to plan task performance prior to this study.

2. *In what ways do the criteria help them plan task performance?*

Learner comments provide instances of using evaluation criteria for different reasons and these are listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Learner statements on use of evaluation criteria in pre- and while-task performance stages

Types of use	Examples	Socio-affective functions
ease in structuring/ organizing assignments	Reflecting on my experience of using evaluation criteria for LTA writing assignments, they guided me to organize my writing in a better way. Also, they helped me to think in certain lines, helping me not to digress from the main subject. (JA1)	object directed
understanding tutor's/assessor's expectations	It gave me a clear idea of what the assessor expected, what I was supposed not to miss while writing my responses. (VR9)	object directed
noticing specific details in the assignments	Evaluation criteria are very useful because they guided me what content I have to use, how to organize the content and what style of language I have to produce for the assignments […]The aspects for all the assignments given in the evaluation criteria are same i.e. content, organization and the language but the instructions for each assignment are different. These instructions are very helpful as a checklist to complete the assignment in the right manner. (AN2)	object directed
reflecting on problems and working on them	The first time when I used the evaluation criteria, I followed them strictly. For every section or for every new idea that I put down, I would look at the evaluation criteria given to me. But eventually I started using the evaluation criteria in a mature way. Instead of using them constantly, I started using them at the end of my writing to bring in organization to my writing. (JA1)	self-directed
expression of future intention to use this process	By the end of the course my response to using the evaluation criteria to plan and write my assignments improved. I think that it is a very significant and necessary aspect of writing an assignment. For the other courses, where we did not receive any evaluation criteria I tried to speculate the expectations of the assessor and create the criteria and then write the assignment. (VR9)	self-directed

Table 1 shows that evaluation criteria have been used by learners in a variety of roles. Their responses capture instances of self-talk (O'Malley and Chamot 1990: 217) and object and self-directed statements (Leontiev 1981). These could be seen as evidences of learning where the evaluation criteria have acted as 'a scaffolding

device' to guide learners to break the tasks into smaller manageable bits and complete them successfully.

3. *Do they experience any change in their perception when using criteria across tasks over a period of time?*

Learners reported that in the initial stages it was either difficult to use the criteria or they did not know the value of using them; but in the later stages they used them at greater length, mostly as a monitor (Krashen 1982) to critically review their work before submission. So learners were found to move from declarative to procedural knowledge (Anderson 1983) in using criteria to plan their performance. (Cognitive, associative, and autonomous are three stages through which learners move from declarative to procedural knowledge according to Anderson in his ACT theory.)

4. *Why could the learners strategically plan and experience benefits using task-specific criteria?*

The learners were given divergent problem-solving activities, which necessitated planning. The assignments were not strictly timed; on each one they could spend anything from a week to a month. So for each assignment the corresponding evaluation criteria acted as a resource to decrease the processing load (Skehan 2009). Under normal circumstances, learners only have extra time at their disposal but they have to work out the guidelines or choose ideas on their own. However, in this study the learners did not have to generate ideas on their own; instead they could pay attention to *what* information to present and *how* to present it in a streamlined manner. So the criteria acted as a set of guidelines and directed their attention to the key ideas to be presented and other discourse structure features like text-specific organization of ideas and presentation of content following standard academic conventions like formality of tone, no plagiarism, hedging to produce the required effect of objectivity, and so on. In this manner, the criteria made all the task components 'salient' (Pienemann 2007) to the learners and helped them complete the task to their satisfaction. Otherwise, as their comments show, they could not have performed in a streamlined manner. Thus, the criteria acted as a scaffold to help them perform better than they may have done otherwise, and this can be seen as an instance of their movement within the ZPD.

Thus, all the task-specific evaluation criteria positively impacted performance because they:

1. made task components salient (Pienemann ibid.) and orientated the learners to attend to details like *what* should be presented and *how* it should be presented

2. broke down the tasks into smaller and manageable bits thereby reducing the processing load (Skehan ibid.)

3. helped them engage in strategic planning over a period and through a variety of writing tasks; so the learners moved from cognitive to associative processing (Anderson op.cit.)

4. ensured *fairness* in evaluation and urged learners to perform better as they had an idea about the assessor's expectations (Kunan 2000)

5. initiated the learners into taking responsibility for their learning; they could also monitor their progress like identifying strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis the levels specified in the criteria

6. made them aware of long-term benefits of using the criteria as future teaching professionals.

This is a small-scale study and has only tapped whether learners use evaluation criteria to plan task performance when they work in an unpressured condition. It has, like Ortega's study (op.cit.), shed light on the *process* of planning. The *product* of planning or its effect on writing performance will be taken up as an extension of this study later. Further studies can be undertaken to understand the generalizable effects of evaluation criteria as a device to generate strategic planning and whether the effects are linked to other variables such as task type or learners' proficiency levels or individual differences. Such investigations will show whether learners attest experiencing similar positive effects in a robust manner.

Conclusion

To conclude, the findings of this study demonstrate that evaluation criteria can be employed to generate strategic planning in adult ESL learners. This is pedagogically significant. Teachers can incorporate evaluation criteria into tasks and document (i) what the benefits of using them are, (ii) which learners benefit the most, and (iii) which task types and task conditions generate maximum benefits. Hence, there is much room for experimentation.

Lastly, it is also important to mention that in this study we have used evaluation criteria to help learners engage in strategic planning in a content-based course. But a similar process can be adopted in any ESL/EFL writing classroom and teachers can study the benefits of strategic planning through the use of evaluation criteria and document various learner-driven strategies employed thereby.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix

Task prompt
A proficiency test paper is given to the learners. They have to analyse it with the help of the following instructions and task-specific evaluation criteria.

*This is a proficiency test used as an entrance test for the BA English programme at EFL-U. Does this test pass all the five principles of assessment (authenticity, reliability, validity, practicality and washback)? Justify your stance with relevant examples. Write a critical response in about **500** words.*

Evaluation criteria

1. Does the response contain an overall thesis statement and comments on all the five principles? Is each principle justified with at least one example? (*content*)

2. Is the response written in academic language (e.g. *passivization, linkers, voice*) and does it include referencing details? (*language*)

3. Is the response presented in three parts (*intro-body-conclusion*) with adequate links between them? Are ideas linked at intra- and inter-sentential levels? (*organisation*)

Facebook Interaction (FBI) and essay writing pre-task: Yemeni EFL students' perceptions, attitudes and challenges

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Abstract

This study investigates Yemeni EFL students' perceptions, attitudes and challenges on integrating Facebook Interaction (FBI) to improve their essay writing. The teacher researcher conducted this study to provide a platform to uncover pedagogical implications that would allow the students to improve their writing skills in a Yemeni EFL context. Fifty Yemeni higher-intermediate EFL learners participated in this study. The researcher created three FB groups and the respondents were required to take part in FBI. An online questionnaire, encompassing 17 closed-ended questions and three open-ended ones, was used to measure students' perceptions, attitudes and challenges. The findings indicated, besides positive attitudes, that FBI helps students effectively in becoming familiar with the writing topics, forming better thought, brainstorming and mind-mapping, reducing spelling errors, as well as acquiring and practising new vocabulary. Though this study shows that typing and time pressure are major challenges faced by students, further research should be recommended to investigate other challenges that arise as a result of FB integration.

Introduction

With the current innovative technology and the easy access to information, present generation learners are fundamentally different from past generation learners. According to Prensky (2001), people who grew up with technology around them are called 'Digital Natives' for "our students today are all 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet" (Prensky ibid: 1). People who grew up in a different world and have later adapted, sometimes with difficulty, to the new digital world are called 'Digital Immigrants' as he defines "Those of us who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology are Digital Immigrants." (Prensky op.cit.).

The easy access to and abundance of information available through cyberspace and the different communication means (synchronous or asynchronous) have changed learners' perceptions of the world, the relationships between educators and learners, as well as learning styles. As a consequence, there is now a widespread agreement among foreign language educators that technology should be utilised in instruction, a premise that is supported by scientific research

(Chapelle 1989, 2003, 2005; Warschauer 1997; Warschauer and Meskill 2000; Zhao 2003; Blake 2009; Goertler 2009).

Computer mediated communication and social networks
For Warschauer (2001: 207) CMC refers to "reading, writing and communication via networked computers". He pinpointed the types of CMC as synchronous "whereby people communicate in real time" or asynchronous "whereby people communicate in a delayed fashion by computer, e.g. by email" (Warschauer op.cit.). Chun (2008) stated that synchronous CMC encompasses text-based instant messaging, Internet Relay Chat (IRC) or simply chat, and multiuser virtual realities. On the other hand, asynchronous CMC subsumes text-based email, bulletin boards, newsgroups, forums, blogs and wikis.

Social Network Sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, Myspace, YouTube, Google+, Twitter, and LinkedIn are examples of CMC. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), these SNSs have attracted millions of Internet users, many of whom have incorporated these sites into their daily practices. Facebook (FB), the most popular SNS, serves a huge online community. According to FB (2014), it has 1.23 billion users worldwide as of December 31, 2013, out of which the Republic of Yemen has 1,200,000 active users (Social Times 2014). Its feature of allowing its users to post information and comments, chat with others, as well as collaborate within the system is worth investigating in ESL/EFL, especially in the area of writing.

FB and writing
The interactive feature of FB is believed to provide students with great opportunities to practise their writing. In other words, students post their written pieces, receive comments, write and post their own comments, replying to other FB group members. Therefore, this interactive communication enables students to actively engage in the writing process and improve their writing skills (Schultz 2000, as cited in Zhao 2003). Also, the computer-based grammar checkers and spelling checkers, that students use from time to time while interacting on FB groups, are considered to be powerful ways of providing immediate feedback on their written output (Jacobs and Rodgers 1999, as cited in Zhao 2003). Further, the use of FB is deemed to have a positive impact on boosting students' motivation and attitude (Kabilan, Ahmed and Abidin 2010).

However, there are a number of challenges that should be taken into account when incorporating Web 2.0 tools in teaching/learning. These challenges are embedded in the risks that are associated with the use of SNSs in general and FB in particular. Those risks include users' safety (Selwyn 2007), identity theft, bullying, stalking, even blackmailing (Gross and Acquisti 2005, as cited in White 2009). Besides, time-management is another issue that may emerge as a result of students' using FB to 'hang out' (Selwyn 2007).

In this study, the teacher researcher looked at a task-based learning (TBL) framework proposed by Willis (1996) and a task-based language teaching (TBLT)

framework proposed by Nunan (2004) and tried to investigate the following questions:

1. How does Facebook interaction (FBI) assist Yemeni higher-intermediate students in writing their essays?
2. What are the Yemeni students' attitudes towards FBI integration in the writing class?
3. What are the challenges faced by Yemeni EFL students while utilising FBI in the writing class?

Methodology

FB utilisation

This study was carried out at AMIDEAST-Sana'a, which is a US-funded non-profit educational service organisation based in Sana'a, in July 2012. For the writing pre-task, the teacher researcher created three different FB groups (see Table 1) and required the students to participate in those groups for 20 minutes, in the computer lab, every time they had an essay writing task. Having finished their FBI, students were required to go back to their classes and start writing their essays (the task).

Table 1: Facebook groups

Facebook groups	
Fun for Interaction	https://www.facebook.com/groups/fun4interaction/
Interaction for Fun	https://www.facebook.com/groups/interactionforfun/
Interaction is Fun'	https://www.facebook.com/groups/interactionisfun/

In the FB groups, the teacher researcher posted an essay topic, each time there was an essay writing task, for students to enrich with their views as well as images, videos and other relevant hypermedia of their own choice. The time of each writing session was two hours (one hour for the teacher's writing lesson delivery plus one hour for the writing task) and the total number of the writing sessions was six, as a part of a six-week course, at the end of which students were asked to respond to an online survey.

Participants

Fifty higher-intermediate students, 28 males and 22 females, studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in three classes participated in this study. The respondents were in three different classes (same EFL level) and had three different FB groups, created for the purpose of an essay writing pre-task.

Instrument

An online mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) survey with Google Forms was utilised in this study. This survey was made up of three parts, the first of which is about students' personal information (demographic data) such as name, age, and gender. The second part of the survey encompassed 17 items with a four-

point Likert Scale of 'Strongly agree',' Agree', 'Disagree', 'Strongly disagree'. This part was prepared to collect the respondents' views on certain aspects related to the ways in which FBI might help in essay writing pre-task, the respondents' attitudes towards the use of FBI, and the challenges that might come to surface when utilising FBI. The third part contained three open-ended questions to enable the respondents to subjectively state the ways in which FBI might have helped them in an essay writing pre-task, and the ways in which FBI motivated them, as well as the challenges they faced when using FBI.

Procedure
The teacher researcher administered the online Google Forms survey at the end of the six-week course by sending its web address link to the FB groups. Then, he convened all the students in the computer lab. After providing them with clear instructions and advising them to read all the items carefully, the teacher researcher urged the students to respond to all of the items to the best of their knowledge and honestly. All 50 students responded to the online questionnaire and, therefore, the return rate was 100%.

Results and discussion

Results presented below address the students' responses to the questions set by the teacher researcher regarding their perceptions of the different ways in which FBI might help them in essay writing pre-tasks and their attitudes towards the experience of using FBI as an essay writing pre-task as well as the challenges facing them while utilising FBI.

Demographic Data
The majority of the students responding to the questionnaire were between 18 and 20 years old 56% of the students were male and 44% were female.

Students' perceptions of improving their writing through the use of FBI as a pre-task
Items 1-7 of the questionnaire were designed to find out the respondents' views on how FBI helped them improve their writing. Those responses are grouped under two main categories 'Cumulative Agree' and 'Cumulative Disagree' as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Students' perceptions of improving their writing through FBI

No.	Item	Cumulative Agree (%)	Cumulative Disagree (%)
1.	FBI comments and posts helps with topic familiarity	88.0	12.0
2.	FBI helps in brainstorming and mind-mapping	82.0	18.0
3.	Spell-checker assists in reducing errors	85.0	15.0
4.	Comments made through FBI help form better thought before writing	86.0	14.0

5.	FBI makes essay writing easy	80.0	20.0
6.	Reading comments and posts on FBI helps acquire new vocabulary	87.0	13.0
7.	Replying and commenting through FBI helps practise vocabulary	90.0	10.0

From the table above, it is clear that the majority of the students (above 80%) agree that FBI is of great help when it is utilised in essay writing pre-tasks. The responses indicate that FBI can help students become familiar with the writing topic, brainstorming and mind-mapping, reducing errors, forming better thought before they start writing, acquiring new vocabulary, as well as practising this vocabulary.

The responses above are also in line with the answers to the first question of the qualitative section of the questionnaire. Gaining new vocabulary, practising vocabulary, flow of ideas, and improving spelling were mentioned frequently in respondents' answers. Examples of those comments are as follows:

- *The repetitive practice for writing helps teach us practically the correct way for using vocabulary.*
- *Usually, interaction on Facebook gives me more information and more new ideas. First, the interacting in the Facebook helps me in finding new ideas for my topic. Second, I can get two or more different opinions from interacting in Facebook.*
- *The more I write comments in English, the more I get acquainted to thinking in English and writing directly my comments without the need to translate.*

It appears from the above-mentioned comments that FBI helps students a lot in their writing when it is used as a medium for writing pre-tasks particularly in brainstorming, mind-mapping, obtaining and practising new vocabulary, as well as improving spelling.

FBI impact on students' attitudes
To explore the effect of the use of FBI as an essay writing pre-task on students' attitudes, items 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 posited some predictions that might link FBI and students' attitudes. Item 8 explores whether there is a connection between respondents' anxiety and working on FB group. Item 9 investigates respondents' comfort while commenting on FB group. Item 10 looks at whether the respondents find it convenient that other FB group members read their comments and posts. Item 11 examines respondents' motivation when their comments and posts are read by other FB group members. Finally, items 12 and 13 investigate respondents' readiness and liking, respectively, on discussing topics on FB before starting doing their writing.

Table 3: FBI impact on students' attitudes

No.	Item	Cumulative Agree (%)	Cumulative Disagree (%)
8.	Feeling anxious and worried while posting on FB group	20.0	80.0
9.	Feeling easy and comfortable while commenting on FB group	75.0	25.0
10.	It is convenient that FB group members read and comment on each other posts	96.0	4.0
11.	Feeling motivated when FB group members like his/her comments and posts	98.0	02.0
12.	Feeling ready and prepared for writing after topic discussion on FB group	80.0	20.0
13.	Liking topic discussion on FB group before meeting in the classroom	84.0	16.0

As shown above in Table 3, the highest percentages are associated with motivation (98%) and convenience (96%). Students feel motivated and encouraged when other FB group members like their comments and posts and they do not seem to mind that other FB group members read and comment on their posts. Additionally, when students interact with each other over topics on FB group, the majority like to discuss on FB group before meeting in the classroom (84%), feel ready and prepared to write after discussing topics on FB group (80%), and find it comfortable commenting and receiving comments on FB group.

Respondents' answers to the third open-ended question of the qualitative section of the questionnaire to whether FBI makes them motivated support the findings reported above. Students stress that they feel motivated, comfortable, happy and encouraged while interacting on FB group. Examples of their comments are as follows:

- *Yes, it is. In making me willing to study more and discuss with friends, I mean it helps me exchange ideas and opinions.*
- *Yes it does. It helps motivate me when using new vocabulary, also when I comment and respond to others' comments. This motivates me to write and practice more.*
- *Sure it does. If my group-mates like what I say and I will be happy and encouraged to write what we discuss.*

Challenges faced by students utilising FBI for essay writing pre-tasks
To find answers to the third question of this paper, the teacher researcher used items 14-17 of the questionnaire to elicit the challenges that might face respondents while utilising FBI for their writing pre-task. The first possible challenge is whether or not the students find typing challenging while interacting on FB. The second is whether they find FB graphics, hyperlinks as a source of distraction. The third is whether they use an e-dictionary while interacting on

FB. The fourth is whether they double-check their pieces of writing before they post them to their FB group. The cumulative percentage for those who agree or disagree is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Challenges faced by students while utilising FBI for their writing pre-task

No.	Item	Cumulative Agree (%)	Cumulative Disagree (%)
14.	Typing on the keyboard is a challenge	68.0	32.0
15.	FB graphics and hyperlinks are a source of distraction	48.0	52.0
16.	Frequent use of e-dictionary	72.0	28.0
17.	Double-checking before posting	65.0	35.0

As can be seen in the table above, the majority of the respondents (68%) agree with the researcher's prediction that typing on the keyboard is one difficulty the students have to deal with and the teacher has to address and bear in mind when utilising FBI. Contrary to the researcher's prediction that FB graphics and hyperlinks are a source of distraction, the majority of the respondents (52%) disagree with that. However, the majority of the respondents (65%) agree that they have to double-check before they post any comment or other pieces of writing and frequently use an e-dictionary while interacting on FB.

The findings above are also in line with the answers to the second question of the qualitative section of the questionnaire. In their answers to this question, the respondents highlighted typing, double-checking, consistency of ideas, time limit, and misunderstandings as major challenges they face while working on FB. Here are some examples:

- *Typing! Typing! And typing!*
- *To find the good answer for each on the Facebook group QUICKLY.*
- *Sometimes I didn't find the correct vocabulary while I am discussing*

Conclusion and recommendations

From this study of 50 Yemeni EFL students' perceptions, attitudes and challenges, it seems clear that the utilisation of FBI in writing pre-tasks is of great help to them when writing their essays. Students' responses indicate that FBI assists them a lot in becoming familiar with the writing topics, forming better thoughts, brainstorming and mind-mapping, reducing spelling errors, as well as acquiring and practising new vocabulary. In addition, their responses reflected their positive attitudes toward FB use as they felt motivated, comfortable, and ready to write after they had been engaged in FBI. The main challenges, which the students faced and teachers should tackle, are typing on the keyboard and providing more time for the students, since they prefer to double-check and consult e-dictionaries before posting comments on the FB group. It is recommended that further research should focus on the role and perceptions of language teachers on utilising FBI as

writing pre-tasks and the challenges of integrating FB to improve students' other language skills such as reading.

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Assessment literacy for teachers: how to identify and write a good test

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Abstract

Teachers are increasingly expected to demonstrate an understanding of testing as part of their ongoing engagement with monitoring their students as well as sometimes advising on external tests. But what makes a good test? And how do we know that a particular test is appropriate for the student it is testing? Testing is driven by theory, practicality and, increasingly, how the test affects the focus of activities in the classroom. When evaluating or writing a test we need to consider three important principles of testing: validity, reliability and impact. This paper describes each of these factors and why they might be important for a teacher to be aware of and understand. It also considers their relationship to ethical practice and how this impacts on the teacher's responsibility to their students. It offers examples of some familiar objective test items such as multiple choice as well as productive tasks in speaking and writing and outlines some 'rules' for test writing which teachers can apply when evaluating or writing tests.

Introduction

There is a recognized increasing need for teachers to know about assessment. This is across all subject areas and has a range of benefits both to the teachers themselves and to their students. This is especially true in language where, with such a wealth of material on offer, both as books and through the Internet, teachers are shifting towards becoming curators of resources for their students and have to be able to evaluate the usefulness and impact of working with those resources.

At the same time, testing has now become part of the narrative of a learner's progression rather than solely an event at the end of learning, and so there is a greater focus on ongoing assessment via formative testing. This means that teachers are involved in a much greater variety of assessments across the cline from diagnostic to high stakes external tests. In practical terms teachers need to be able to identify good and bad tests in, for example, coursebooks, whether tests are assessing what the teacher or students desire to be assessed, how to interpret scores, how a test might impact positively or negatively on learning, and even to design and write tests themselves.

The result is a drive to incorporate assessment literacy as part of teacher development not only so that teachers are best placed to evaluate and create

tests for their students but as part of their own development by understanding assessment criteria and how these operate. At the same time, teachers are under increasing pressure to know and deliver more so we do have to be practical about how much a teacher can absorb and usefully apply given the wealth of other material she or he has to curate and deliver. This paper is not an attempt to cover all aspects of testing but simply to focus on what a teacher might prioritize in order to evaluate or advise their students. So what are the bare bones that a teacher needs to know?

Testing principles

The very first thing that a teacher needs to understand are the core principles behind testing. These again apply across all subject areas but can vary in importance and focus depending on the type of test a teacher wishes to deliver. These core principles are validity, reliability and impact. These apply to all tests and test items whether those tests are constructed of objective items (such as multiple choice) or productive tasks for speaking and writing.

1. Validity

Test validity has many strands but a key focus for teachers would be whether or not tests are testing what they intend to test and this also relates to the conclusions that can be drawn from the scores on the test. We need to trust that the test is giving us the information we need to know. This principle of testing is crucial as it relates to fairness. Fairness is not just about reporting scores but has a more ethical dimension. Any form of assessment – and especially failing that assessment – can have an impact on an individual's self-esteem or sense of self-worth so we must ensure that any tests we impose on students are completely fair both in what they are testing and in how they test.

The very first thing we need to identify is which skills or abilities we are measuring. These should only be ones which have been an objective of the learning programme. In other words, we must make sure a test does not assess competences that a learner might not have had access to or practice in.

1.1 Test focus
We need to know a test is not dependent on variables (or skills) we are not trying to test. An example might be when a student is asked to read a lot of input before a speaking task. What are we testing here – is it the Speaking skill? Or Reading and Speaking? If we intend to assess Speaking competences, then the task must not depend on the candidate understanding a large chunk of written text in order to perform the task adequately.

1.2 Test and task/item match
Equally if we need to test how well a student can write, we probably do not want to give them a test composed of multiple choice items, which may demonstrate what they know but not what they can actually do. So the match between test purpose and test item is critical.

Let's look at an example. If we have a writing task for our intermediate B2 level students that is as follows:

Write a review of an art exhibition you have been to.

Superficially this may look a reasonable task. It is asking for a review, which the teacher has covered in class, and the reading input is short and clear so should not interfere with the student's ability to do the task. However, although this might work well in the classroom where a lot of support can be given, it is challenging as a test item as it relies on the candidates having been to an exhibition and/or being able to visualise such. Even then they need to be able to capture that visualisation in words. This is very hard in our L1 so how fair is this for a learner? It potentially excludes those whose fluency does not work in this way. It may make those not familiar with this context nervous and this will add to their underperformance. So is this task really testing writing? And is it fair?

2. Reliability
Reliability is a testing principle that focuses on how reliable scores are and whether a test is consistent over time. This is a strong feature of testing organizations and awarding bodies and can be challenging for an individual teacher to manage. High stakes external tests especially undergo rigorous trialling processes and statistical analyses to ensure that a test measures each student in exactly the same way that test items are consistent with the level and with previous versions and that any test tasks which are marked by examiners are being assessed in a standardized and reliable way. This again relates to fairness – both candidates and test users (e.g. universities or employers) need to know that every student with a certificate for a particular test has been measured in the same way.

So what aspects of reliability should a teacher be aware of? Firstly, teachers need to know that reliability is important for their students and that there are some aspects they can work with. For example, they should ensure that every student gets the same test. Sometimes the teacher might give students different assignments to measure how far they have absorbed the same learning objectives. This is fine but a teacher needs to be aware of reliability to ensure that all the assignments are equally challenging and accessible. This can be done by looking at past tasks, asking colleagues to review the tasks, seeking the views of external experts or external tests, and/or aligning to descriptors given in external frameworks like the Common European Framework of Reference. An awareness of the issue and a willingness to check are probably the first steps to being able to implement reliability.

3. Impact
This is arguably the most important testing principle for a teacher, even if they are only assessing external tests to approve. All assessments can potentially have important effects and consequences within a classroom (washback), within an education system, and within society more widely.

Ideally we would all strive to create a positive impact on both teaching and learning within the classroom. In order to do this one of the most important things we need to do is to ensure that the test is integrated with the curriculum. This is true whether we are implementing a formative or diagnostic test or a summative end-of-year or term test. We are all aware that teachers focus learning on the assessment and so, recognising this, we should make the assessment as relevant and supportive of the learning process as possible.

Let's look at an example of a writing task for students learning business English.

> *Imagine you are running a large company. Write a proposal saying what you would do to increase sales. Write no more than 350 words.*

This ostensibly looks like a reasonable task for the context. It is certainly focused on business and targets proposal writing – a very important genre in the business world. So we could argue this has real-life relevance (context validity) for the learners and would demonstrate to someone external how far the candidate would be able to perform this task in the real world (predictive validity). The task input is short and straightforward so there are no apparent variables to affect the assessment of writing. Nevertheless, this task has significant problems. Firstly, it is not only highly unlikely that the range of learners taking this test would have been in the position of running a large company so the candidates are asked to role play something they have no experience of. Secondly, even assuming they were business leaders, it is rather implausible that a Managing Director would write a whole proposal with this focus in 350 words. Finally, we should look at what impact this task might have on learning. In preparing for this task, the teacher would be obliged to ask learners to imagine themselves in a very senior role which they would not be required to do in real life. Also their language learning would be distorted into squashing complex ideas and unquantifiable information into an inappropriate summary – to no good end as no one would be asked to do this in real life. A better task might be to ask candidates to write a proposal saying how their team or department might save money or cut costs. This is constrained so better suited to the exam format (i.e. 350 words) but still targets proposal writing and the language of suggestion and persuasion.

Features of items

As mentioned above, test items generally separate into productive tasks and objective items.

1. Productive tasks
The benefits of setting productive tasks are that they usually reflect real-life skills that the students will need, they can create highly positive activity in the classroom because of their relevance, and they also allow students to offer their own input which can be very motivating. When setting these tasks for Speaking or Writing, teachers should check that the tasks are:

- fair, i.e. they only elicit what has been taught
- accessible, i.e. they do not rely on any external world knowledge
- real world, i.e. they represent something students might have to display competence in in real life
- clear and unambiguous
- written in language which is easier than the level targeted
- doable within the stated word count or time available.

We have discussed these aspects in the examples above.

2 Objective items

Objective test items are frequently used to test reading and listening skills as well as specific grammar and vocabulary knowledge. They are likely to be the type of test item that teachers have most familiarity with because they often appear at the end of coursebook units as well as in school summative tests. The focus of discussion here is on multiple choice items as they are the core of objective testing and many 'rules' which apply to multiple choice apply also to other objective items.

A multiple choice item is composed of two parts:

- a stem or question
- options which consist of a key and generally 2 or 3 distractors or wrong answers.

An item such as the following is a typical multiple choice question following a listening text:

> *What is the speaker's opinion?*
> *a. He supports a ban on smoking.*
> *b. He does not support a ban.*
> *c. He thinks a ban should be optional for each restaurant.*

However, items such as these break many of the rules for multiple choice questions for language.

- The stem/question does not guide the students on where to listen in the text.
- The options are of varying lengths.
- The options have a different grammatical structure.
- The options are positive, negative and in between. This means they are not a true test of language understanding as if a student is considering one he will automatically reject the opposite option so they become highly guessable.

An example of a better multiple choice item which follows a listening test is as follows:

Students who practise a sport
a. do well in their studies.
b. make good use of their time.
c. wake up early every day.

It adheres to the following 'rules' which should be applied to all items.

- An item must be at the appropriate level.
- The stem or question must be clear on its own (i.e. without reading the options).
- The stem or question must identify where to listen or read.
- The distractor options must be plausible and capture genuine distraction.
- All options must be of similar length and structure.
- All options must have the same focus e.g. positive or negative.
- The key must be true and only the key is true.
- The item must test language knowledge not general knowledge.

There are other more detailed rules to follow and there are many websites that discuss and outline the necessary features of objective items. Teachers would be advised to apprise themselves of these 'rules' so that they can become expert judges and satisfactory writers of such items.

Summary

What has been outlined is the need for all teachers to be aware of testing principles because of the impact which tests have on the test taker. Teachers need to pay special attention to aspects of fairness, accessibility, authenticity and impact (or washback). When evaluating or writing tasks for writing and speaking, check that the tasks are fair and real. When evaluating or writing multiple choice items, ensure the items follow the 'rules', otherwise they are not only unlikely to give you reliable information about the learner's progress but they may also be unfair on the candidate.

Although all tests should ideally encompass all the principles of testing, in fact the strength of each feature is likely to vary according to what type of test is being applied. So you might find, for example, that validity is the critical principle in any formative tests you run, whereas reliability might be a strong feature of summative or external tests. Impact will always be important as it dictates how any test will affect classroom practice.

Innovations in pre-service second language teacher education for the elementary level in West Bengal

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Abstract

West Bengal recently revised the curriculum for the 2-year D.El.Ed. (Diploma in Elementary Teacher Education) in line with the recommendations of NCFTE 2009. A number of innovations have been proposed and transactional modalities recommended in the newly developed curriculum and syllabus for school education in the state. To improve the quality of teaching of English, changes have been suggested in the curriculum of second language teacher education for the elementary level. First-hand experience of working in a group that developed the revised SLTE (Second Language Teacher Education) curriculum for D.El.Ed. motivated me to investigate the current reality of SLTE at the elementary level and find out conditions necessary for successful implementation of the innovations. The paper discusses three areas viz. content, approach and evaluation of elementary SLTE, where innovations have been proposed. Emphasizing the importance of properly equipped teacher educators with mastery over discourse norms, the paper tries to find ways of empowering teacher educators to make innovations successful at the grassroots level.

Introduction

West Bengal has revised the curriculum for elementary teacher education keeping in view the expected transactional modalities in real classrooms at the school level. A number of innovations have been proposed to align the D.El.Ed curriculum with the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education or NCFTE (2009; 2011). The changed approach in teacher education is a corollary of the National Curriculum Framework or NCF 2005 that recommends a classroom where teachers are thought of as facilitators in the construction of knowledge. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 again makes it mandatory for every teacher to be trained as per NCFTE. The experience of working with a group of experts to revise the curriculum framework for the 2-year Diploma in Elementary Teacher Education or D.El.Ed. inspired me to investigate the feasibility of implementing the new curriculum in the state. I start with a brief description of the context of teacher education for elementary level in West Bengal. Next, I present an outline of the innovations proposed in elementary Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE). This is followed by my investigation about the real context to adapt the innovations. I conclude with a few suggestive measures that would facilitate the successful adaptation of the innovations.

Context

Teacher education in West Bengal

Teacher education for the school level in West Bengal involves a number of agencies working under the Department of Education, Government of West Bengal. Teacher education institutes running Bachelor of Education courses belong to the Higher Education Department and they educate prospective teachers of secondary and higher secondary levels. Teacher education for the elementary level, however, belongs to the School Education Department. Since this paper focuses on elementary education I will describe in detail the context of elementary teacher education in the state.

Teacher education for the elementary level (classes I-VIII)

Three agencies of government are involved in educating teachers for lower (I-IV) and upper elementary levels (V-VIII) in West Bengal. The agencies are:

1. Directorate of School Education,
2. State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), and
3. West Bengal Board of Primary Education (WBBPE), which is an autonomous body.

Figure 1: Elementary Teacher Education in West Bengal (before 2013)
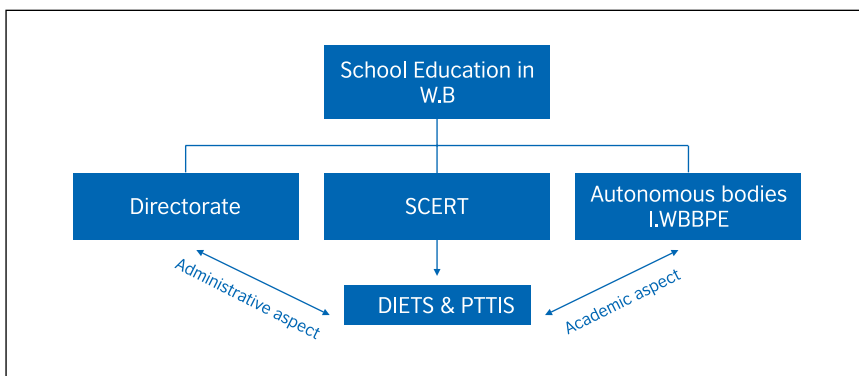
The teacher education institutes catering for elementary level teacher education are District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and Primary Teacher Training Institutes (PTTIs). Before 2013 administrative concerns of both DIETs and PTTIs were looked after by the Directorate of School Education and their academic interests were taken care of by WBBPE. The D.El.Ed. examination was conducted by WBBPE. SCERT was mainly involved in research under various projects of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). At times they organised the training of teacher educators from DIETs and PTTIs. However, a change came about in the teacher education system of the state in January 2013 when SCERT was empowered to take care of both administrative and academic aspects of the DIETs.

Figure 2: Elementary Teacher Education in West Bengal (since 29/01/2013
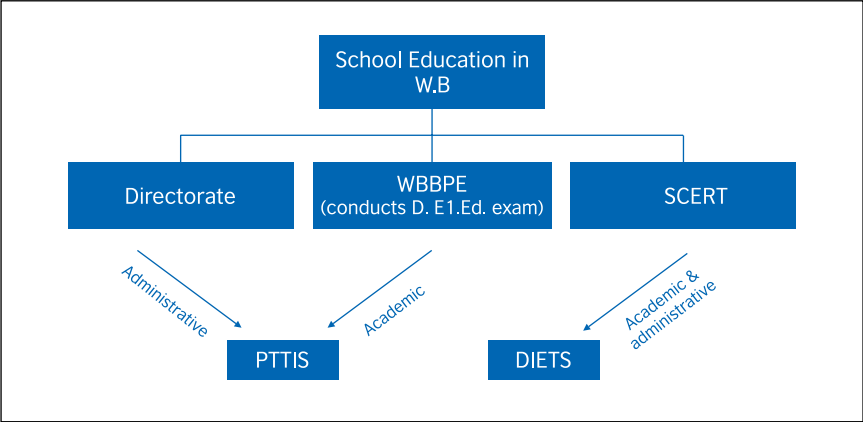
However, PTTIs remained under the dual control of WBBPE and the Directorate of School Education. In the changed scenario the Government entrusted SCERT with the responsibility of revising the curriculum framework for D.El.Ed. in February 2013. Subsequently, workshops were organised in two phases by SCERT for aligning and calibrating the D.El.Ed curriculum for the state in the light of NCFTE 2009 and 2011. On 20 March 2013 the final draft of the revised D.El.Ed curriculum was handed over to the Government.

Innovations proposed

Outline of the proposed curriculum
The two-year programme will consist of thirty courses, twenty-four of which will be theory-based and six practicum-based. These thirty courses will cover seven curricular areas spread over four semesters. However, my focus is on the innovations proposed for Second Language Teacher Education in this curriculum.

Figure 3: Innovations proposed in elementary SLTE
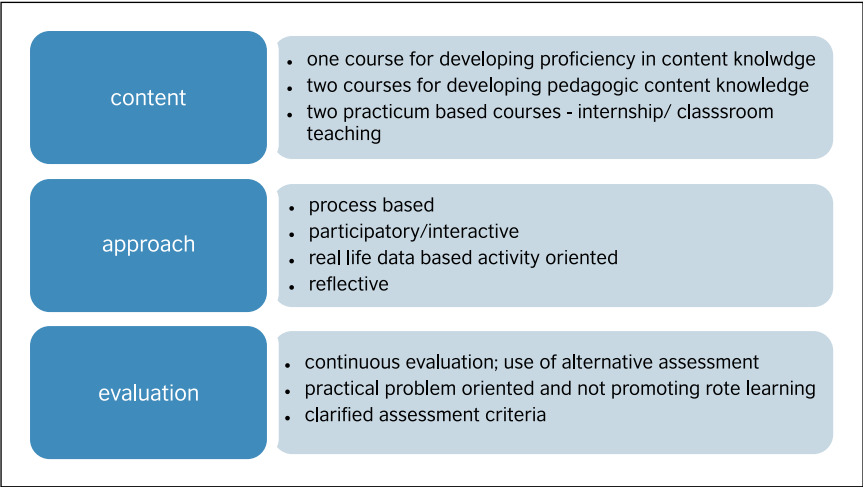
Innovation in the content of the SLTE curriculum

The proposed Second Language Teacher Education curriculum consists of three courses in the area of Curriculum and Pedagogic Studies. The three courses are:

1. CPS 01- Proficiency in English
2. CPS 09- Pedagogy of English Language I
3. CPS 10- Pedagogy of English Language II

In addition to these theory-based courses, there will be two practicum-based courses comprising internship and classroom teaching.

It is worth mentioning that the current curriculum has only one course for training ESL teachers. This course comprises the content of teaching ESL and the methodology of teaching English. Experience shows that this course with a very traditional content and approach can hardly prepare ESL teachers for the challenges of an ELT classroom that follows the constructivist approach. Hence changes are proposed in the course content to equip teachers with "content knowledge", "pedagogical content knowledge" and "curricular knowledge" (Shulman 1986: 7).

Innovations proposed in the approach of teacher education

The Preface to NCFTE 2009 points out that the new concerns of school curriculum and the expected transactional modalities need to be emphasized in designing the curriculum framework for teacher education. It also mentions that the focus on process-based teacher education has to be attempted as models for practising teachers to adopt/adapt. Reflective practice is to be the central aim of teacher education and student-teachers need to be provided with opportunities for self-learning, reflection, assimilation and articulation of new ideas. To empower student-teachers to be 'reflective teachers' the TE curriculum should provide:

> *[…] a variety of learning experiences in institutionally based sessions and in real school and classroom, with an emphasis on awareness raising, collaborative learning, reflection and learning from experience.* (Wright 2010: 267)

Bearing in mind the concepts mentioned above, we proposed that the mode of transaction should be interactive or participatory. Interactive learning and teaching would take place through:

- classroom discussions for developing conceptual understanding based on a close reading of text materials/research papers
- individual and group presentation
- debates and discussions
- interaction
- group learning
- peer learning
- workshops/seminars.

To equip student-teachers with the experience of working in the real world they would be given activities based on first-hand data collected from real contexts or schools. Such practical activities would include:

- case studies through interviewing children and guardians
- assignments based on intensive reading and relating them with real classroom situations
- writing reports on peer observation, school visits
- writing a journal
- project work
- role play
- internship.

The proposed activities and transactional modes are expected to empower teachers to reflect upon and learn from experience.

Innovations proposed in the evaluation scheme
The existing scheme of evaluation comprises end-of-course written evaluation and internal assessment. There is variety in the allotment of marks in internal assessment in different courses, and student-teachers depend on rote learning to answer questions for written evaluation. My interviewees stated that internal assessment is done without proper evaluation criteria. The proposed curriculum introduces an evaluation scheme that comprises continuous evaluation and an end-of-course written test. The rationale behind introducing continuous evaluation is that in order to enable the student- teachers to implement CCE in the classroom, they themselves should experience such methods and find them helpful in their own learning (Wright 2010).

The proposed continuous evaluation is to be based on:

- course-based assignments (both theory and practical courses)
- development of portfolios
- project work – group and individual
- school-based practical activities.

Any of these modes may be used for internal assessment in each semester as found appropriate for the specific courses being taught. Thus initiative will be taken to use reflection not only in classroom transaction but also in evaluation. The division of marks for theoretical courses will be 30% for internal assessment and 70% for external evaluation. However, it may be worth mentioning what Akbari (2007) said about the conditions for successful implementation of reflection in classroom teaching. In her opinion, effective reflection would be impossible unless a sound grasp of its basic principles is established and a mastery of the discourse norms and features of the community is established.

Hence I tried to investigate how prepared our teacher educators are to implement these innovations appropriately.

Findings

Lack of coordination

The data collected from elementary teacher education institutes and SCERT shows that there are 16 DIETs, 22 Government PTTIs, 22 Government-aided and Sponsored PTTIs, and 115 Private PTTIs to take care of elementary teacher education in West Bengal. SCERT looks after the academic and administrative aspects of DIETS but PTTIs are controlled by the West Bengal Board of Primary Education (WBBPE) and the Department of School Education. Teacher Education Institutes for upper elementary and secondary levels on the other hand are under the Higher Education Department. The Department of School Education has no connection with these higher education institutes.

WBBPE is empowered to look after the curriculum and syllabus of the lower elementary level, i.e. grades I-IV in school. However, the D.El.Ed examination (preparing student-teachers to teach till class VIII) is conducted by them. Till 2013 the curriculum and syllabus for D.El.Ed were also developed by this Board. Hence, lack of coordination and lack of accountability is apparent in the elementary teacher education system of West Bengal.

Scarcity of properly equipped faculty for ELT

Though in each institute four to five classes per week are allotted for ELT, the number of permanent trainers of English is not sufficient. In the 16 DIETs there are four permanent teachers of English and in the PTTIs there are very few permanent teachers of English. Teaching is locally arranged by using English teachers of Government or Government-aided schools or retired faculty of teacher education institutes. Secondly, these teachers of English have an M.A. in English Literature along with a B.Ed. None of them has a specialization in ELT or in Applied Linguistics. Very few of the faculty preparing student-teachers for elementary ESL classrooms have an M.Ed. Consequently, the issue that claims attention is how equipped such teachers would be to enable student-teachers to reflect upon and construct concepts such as:

- Factors affecting Second Language Acquisition
- Four skills of language and their relation to acquisition and learning
- Using portfolios for subjective assessment in the English classroom
- Planning and developing materials
- Critical analysis of existing material and designing innovative supplementary tasks.

Classroom reality

The lecture method is still the predominant transactional mode with occasional use of PowerPoint presentation. At times student-teachers may be asked to reflect on classroom activities in the feedback sessions but there is no scope for structured

reflective activities as proposed in the new curriculum. One member of the faculty in English informed me that he used journal writing and peer observation with his student-teachers. However, it was not clear whether peer observation was done with structured guidelines about objectives, and one is therefore not sure that learning might have occurred through reflection. According to a number of principals of DIETs and PTTIs, a number of trainers are not well versed in the application of reflective practices. In the words of one such interviewee: "Appointing properly qualified and experienced teacher educators is a must to enable student-teachers to implement the constructivist approach in L2 teaching". The student-teachers' views reflected in the report of the Joint Review Mission in April 2013 reveal the same: "Teachers also expressed how the teacher training followed the dominant paradigm and did not reflect or relate to the real situation and context."

The Preface to NCFTE 2009 mentions that the new concerns of the school curriculum and the expected transactional modalities need to be emphasized in designing the curriculum framework for teacher education. The latest West Bengal textbooks of ESL are based on the constructivist approach. Hence, student-teachers should also experience the same approach in teacher education institutes. As Korthagen (2001) posits, if the children to be taught by student-teachers need to develop a problem-solving attitude in their life, they need to develop reflection skills. The student-teachers' learning to reflect on their own experience is an important preparation for enabling their students to gain the capacity for independent and continuous learning.

Measures planned for successful implementation
SCERT plans to encourage the teacher educators of INSET to increase faculty strength. A pool of teachers is going to be shortlisted by using a British Council developed platform for the selection of trainers. They will give support to the institutes till permanent trainers are appointed. Secondly, the Department of School Education is also actively pursuing the regular appointment of faculty with WBPSC. This is in keeping with the recommendations of the JRM constituted for Teacher Education.

Conclusion

The innovations proposed for elementary ESL teacher education are expected to prepare student-teachers to implement the constructivist approach in ELT in West Bengal. However, two main issues need be resolved for successful implementation of these innovations – the dearth of second language teacher education faculty and appropriate pedagogical content knowledge. Whether SCERT's plan can resolve the issues is yet to be seen. From my long experience of West Bengal INSET it seems very difficult to identify an adequate number of properly trained INSET teacher educators who would be able to do justice to the innovations proposed. Secondly, mere short-term 'training' by the British Council may not be empowering enough to enable INSET teacher educators to help student-teachers construct and reconstruct concepts on the pedagogy of English.

I feel that appointing permanent faculty of English with NCTE approved qualification should be immediately initiated. At the time of appointment preference should be given to candidates with qualifications in ELT or TESOL or Applied Linguistics. Existing ESL faculty should be allowed to obtain PGDTE or DELT or a Masters in ELT. The current faculty as well as the new appointees must be properly oriented in using "reflection in action" and "reflection on action" (Schön 1987) as tools to learn from experience. There should be coordination between DIETs or PTTIs and B.Ed colleges. Finally, to cope with the paucity in second language teacher educators, ICT can be used to reach a large number of trainees using available ESL faculty. The innovations will manifest themselves in elementary classrooms only if the issues mentioned are properly addressed.

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The role of printed materials in promoting reflection in distance ELT teacher education programmes

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Abstract

This paper focuses on promoting reflective skills among trainee teachers for their professional growth in distance ELT teacher education programmes. It is an attempt to analyse how activities in print materials in such distance programmes can be designed effectively to stimulate reflection. As print materials are still the dominant medium of instruction in distance ELT programmes in India, the deliberations will hopefully have significant implications for the teaching-learning process in such contexts. There are many recent studies that consider reflection as a crucial tool for learning and suggest strategies to foster reflection among learners. But in a distance education system, the measures to be adopted for promoting reflection need special consideration, different from those in regular education. Print materials need to be used optimally to help compensate for the physical gap between learners and teachers in such a context. The paper offers some suggestions on how teacher support can be built into distance learning print materials to encourage trainees to reflect, and highlights this as a special need of distance education teacher trainees. Some materials from an existing distance ELT programme will be used to illustrate the case.

Introduction

Distance education pedagogy is different from regular education pedagogy in many ways. In distance education, the basic feature is that teachers and learners are separated physically from each other for most of the time during a programme of study. This makes education possible/convenient for in-service professionals, married women with family responsibilities, and other persons who cannot attend classes in the face-to-face mode due to personal or professional commitments, problems or responsibilities. This feature of distance education, which also basically differentiates it from regular education, requires the adoption of instructional design suitable for a distance mode. Efforts are being made to build teacher support in the materials in such a programme. With the advent of technology, course designers use both synchronous and asynchronous ways of course delivery to increase support to the learners. On the whole, course designers of a distance education programme need to adopt an approach and pedagogical strategies significantly different from those in regular education.

Reflection – a gap

Reflection is a buzzword nowadays especially in the field of teacher education. A lot of deliberations have taken place regarding strategies to promote reflection among teachers in a regular teacher education programme (where the teacher or trainer is present as a facilitator) or in general classroom situations. But the context of distance education is often deprived of such discussions on reflection though it is actually more important to promote this quality in the physical absence of teachers or trainers. In the distance education context, teachers and trainees need to motivate themselves to continue their studies in the midst of distractions, and gain academic and practical professional insights from whatever materials (print and online) they receive on the programme. So the ability to reflect as an adult learner is very important for them to gain maximum professional competence through a programme of study in the distance mode. Accordingly, course designers need to adopt strategies specific to the distance education context to promote reflection among distance teacher trainees.

Why print materials

Many distance education programmes all around the world have utilized technological advancements to deliver instructional materials to the learners. But in developing countries like India, print materials are still the dominant medium of instruction. In many other places too, where online materials are more dominant than print materials, print materials are used as an additional support to learners. Therefore, in order to start from the existing situation in developing countries, we need to exploit the print medium to its maximum. Regarding print materials in distance education, the most often talked-about issues are increasing accessibility by using access devices and making them self-learning enabled. Very little discussion focuses on promoting reflection through print materials. This is why this paper is attempting to generate discussion on this less talked-about issue.

Reflection in distance education

Reflection is defined in different ways for different purposes. For the purpose of this discussion, by reflection through print materials, we mean presenting print materials in such a way that they provide stimuli for thinking, engage learners in activities, and help them use reflective skills. This is important for promoting learner autonomy as well, which is a key feature of distance education. If trainees are able to use their own reflective skills through print materials, it will enhance their learning experience and fill the gap created by the physical absence of teachers to some extent.

What we can do

It is often stressed that distance print materials need to be self-learning, self-directed, self-explanatory, and self-guided so that learners/trainees can easily use them on their own. But just presenting content in a simplified way will only spoon-feed the trainees rather than hone their skills. So it is essential to give them scope to think, contextualize knowledge and learn at a deeper level. That demands a

balance between presentation of content and engaging trainees in activities that trigger reflection.

> *Instructional designers and academics should allow distance learners to be more reflective, to give personal views on topics, to debate and argue their points of view, to question information given by the instructor and textbooks, based on personal observations and knowledge acquired elsewhere.* (Tam 2000)

A demonstration

In the following sections, I will try to present a demonstration of how we might incorporate reflective activities in the text. For this purpose, I will use a model originally propounded by Benjamin Bloom, which was later revised, i.e. Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001).

Figure 1: Revised Bloom's taxonomy

Create

Evaluate

Analyze

Apply

Understand

Remember
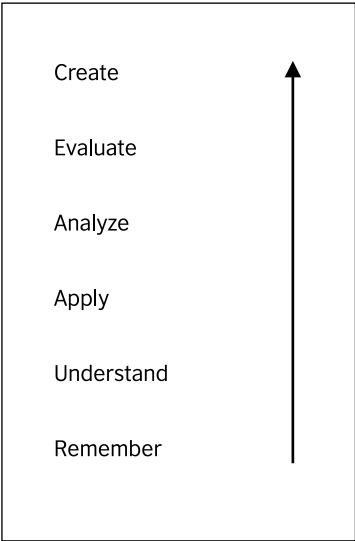
As shown by the arrow, the model presents a continuum from lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills. Though this is not a direct model for reflection, I think that the continuum in this model is appropriate for promoting reflection among distance trainees. This will become clear as we go through the revised design of a text.

The original text (slightly modified)

The following text has been taken from the materials of a distance MA ELT programme in an Indian University. I have slightly modified the text (by adding/ removing a few words and by slightly changing the structure of a sentence) in order to protect the identity of the institution, because I feel that criticizing the type of activity design is more important than criticizing the institution concerned.

> *Inter-language Interference*
> *There is an influence of the properties of the L1 on the course of L2*
> *learning. The learners transfer sounds, structure and usage from one*
> *language to the other. Transfer is of two kinds – positive transfer and*
> *negative transfer. Positive transfer is the result of similarities between the*
> *L1 and L2, while negative transfer is the result of differences between*
> *the two. The latter is known as interference. Positive transfer makes*
> *it acceptable to use the L1 habits in the L2 settings. For example, the*
> *assumption that the subject goes before all other units in a positive*
> *sentence satisfactorily transfers from Telugu to English. On the other hand,*
> *in negative transfer L1 habits cause errors in L2. For example, Subject-*
> *Object-Verb order does not satisfactorily transfer from Telugu to English.*

The redesigned text (by using Bloom's taxonomy)

In the following sections I will present the same content by following the different stages given in Bloom's taxonomy. I will use bullet points in the section for the first stage (*Remember and understand*) for the convenience of analysis in the next part of this paper.

Language Transfer/Interference
(Stage: *Remember and understand*)

a. English is not our mother tongue. In most cases in our daily life, we talk in our mother tongue, i.e. in Tamil, Telugu, Assamese, etc. So when we speak in the second language, i.e. English, it is often influenced by our mother tongue. This is called interference or language transfer.

b. For example, Assamese people often find it difficult to pronounce /f/ or /ʃ/ because it not there in their mother tongues. So while speaking in English, they often pronounce 'ship' as /sɪp/ instead of /ʃɪp/ and /pʰan/ instead of /fæn/.

c. Have you ever noticed such influences among the people in your region? If yes, make a list of them below. (If you are an in-service teacher, you might think of your students coming from different regions, and note if you observed any such influence among your students.)

....

....

d. In the example given above regarding Assamese speakers, the speakers transfer sounds from their mother tongue to English. Sometimes the structure or other features might also be transferred. For example, Telugu speakers easily transfer the subject in the sentence-initial position to English, because it is there in Telugu too. For example,
In Telugu, *Manamu andaramu* Bharateeyulam. In English, *We all are Indians*.

e. From the above two examples (the first one in an Assamese context and the second one in a Telugu context), we can see that language transfer can be of different types. In the first case, transfer happened due to differences

between the two languages (Assamese and English). This phenomenon is called negative transfer. In the second case, transfer was the result of similarities between the two languages (Telugu and English). This is called positive transfer.

(Stage: *Apply*)

Now think of some more examples of positive and negative transfers from your own mother tongue to the English language. Make some notes in the following space.

....
....
....

(Stage: *Analyze*)

How do you think language transfer is relevant to language teaching? In the case of positive transfer, we do not need to worry at all. But negative transfer calls for specific strategies for language teaching. As a language teacher, which of the following things would you do with your students if you find negative transfer?

1. Ignore it.
2. Explain the concept of negative transfer.
3. Ask students not to be influenced.
4. Design activities focusing on areas of negative transfer to minimize it.

If you are aware of negative transfer among your students, it will help you identify the areas to work on to help your students improve their English. For example, if you find that many of your students find it difficult to use the verbs 'drink' and 'eat' because there is one single word to refer to both in their native language, you can design activities around this learning point. So we can see that Option 4 given above is correct.

Now look at the following case study.

(I am giving just an outline of the subsequent steps to save space as this will help us visualize the whole process.)

Subsequent steps:

Case study of a teacher designing an activity focusing on an area of negative transfer

(Stage: *Evaluate*)

Present a list of a number of activities. Trainees will choose one that is appropriate for a particular case of negative transfer.
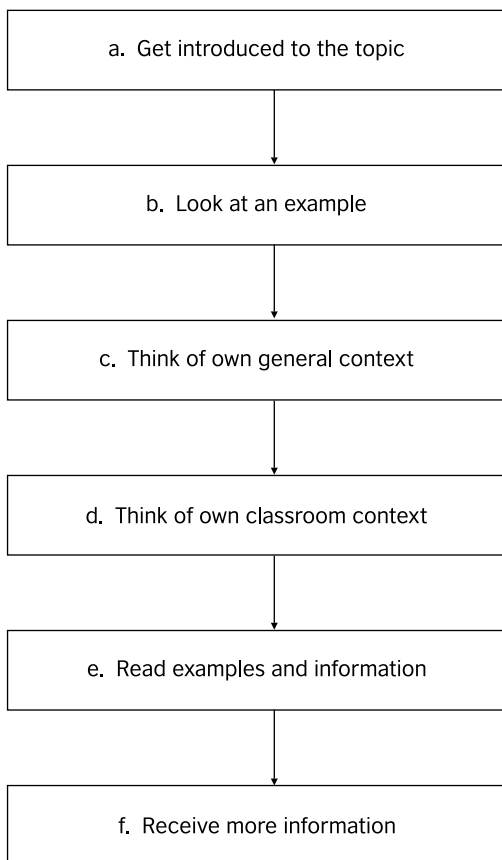
(Stage: *Create*)

Guide trainees to design an activity appropriate for addressing a particular case of language transfer.

Analysing the redesigned activity

If we analyse the above redesigned activity, we may notice the following.

Scaffolding for reflection: Reflection is a complex process. As the learners/trainees in a distance education process study on their own, it would be wrong to expect them to be able to apply advanced reflective skills from the very beginning while confronting new content. The process used here facilitates reflection step by step. The first step (*Remember and understand*) is not really reflection-oriented, but it provides a firm foundation for reflection. If we notice carefully, we can find the following structure in this stage.

Figure 2: Scaffolding for reflection

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│   a.  Get introduced to the topic    │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│      b.  Look at an example          │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│   c.  Think of own general context   │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│  d.  Think of own classroom context  │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│  e.  Read examples and information   │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│    f.  Receive more information      │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Though it seems to be a long process, it is important to prepare the trainees for further reflection on the issue, especially while presenting new content. The next few activities demand the application of the skills of applying, analysing, evaluating and creating respectively. Thus attempts have been made to make a gradual shift to advanced reflective skills. The whole process is a kind of scaffolding facilitating

higher levels of reflection. We can show the structure of scaffolding in this particular presentation of content in the following way.

Figure 3: A structure of scaffolding

Create activities (Design appropriate activities for addressing particular cases of language transfer)

Evaluate activities (Decide appropriacy of activities to be used for language teaching)

Analyze situations in classroom contexts (relevance of language transfer in language teaching)

Apply the knowledge in own context (identify transfers from own mother tongue to English)

Remember and understand the concept of interference

Input between steps: In the distance education context, as the teacher is not always there physically to give instant feedback, the course writer needs to give some additional inputs between activities. For example, in the analysis stage, the question asking the trainees to decide on the appropriate option has been followed by a discussion of the solution. Moreover, case studies have been used at various places to help trainees obtain conceptual clarity.

Other features of SLM (Self-learning Materials): Research in distance education has established the need for using various features in order to make materials self-learning for distance learners. In the above redesigned text, various such features have been incorporated. They include use of personalization (personal pronouns like 'you', 'I', 'we', etc., slightly informal language, direct questions like 'Have you ever noticed such influences among the people in your region?') and simple language (short sentences, small paragraphs, etc.).

Conclusion

Teacher trainees – be they in the regular or the distance mode of training – are learners with experience and the ability to use their reflective skills. Print materials, being a dominant medium of instruction in distance training programmes in

developing countries, should trigger their motivation to use reflective skills for pedagogic purposes. This paper has attempted to generate discussion on possible ways to facilitate such a process on the basis of a revised model developed by Bloom. However, I do not claim that this is the only way to promote reflection among distance teacher trainees, or that one needs to follow the model rigorously to facilitate reflection. What I want to suggest is that incorporating elements of such a model might guide us in the promotion of reflection through print materials in distance teacher training programmes.

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Developing academic reading skills through strategy training

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Abstract

Research in the area of strategy training advocates explicit strategy training. However, such explicit training has not informed and fed into the ESL reading class in India. The paper argues that explicit strategy training can be used to develop the higher-order academic reading skills of adult learners. To enable these academic skills, tertiary level learners (college students) were asked to read a range of texts and guided to match strategies with reading purposes. Their strategy use was assessed through self-reflection grids, which were also used as tools for self-evaluation. Their reactions were captured through guided interviews. An analysis of the grids revealed that learners used a variety of strategies like predicting, re-reading, underlining and listing key ideas to comprehend texts at both factual and inferential levels. The interviewed learners emphasized that the teaching of such strategies would help them apply it to other contexts. An implication of this study therefore is that explicit strategy instruction in ESL classrooms might result in the development of academic reading skills.

Introduction

Learning how to read in a second language is one of the most challenging aspects of second language learning as reading is a complex process involving the use of linguistic knowledge, background knowledge or schema, cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies. A 'good comprehender is an interactive reader who constructs meaning from the text and personal background knowledge, and monitors comprehension, making inferences using text clues to confirm or abandon hypotheses' (Wade 1990). This ability can be effectively acquired through intensive and specialized instruction and practice.

Research problem

It is generally observed that students who have insufficient exposure to academic reading in English at the school level face difficulties in reading academic texts at the undergraduate level due to the specific nature of the discourse, the density of information and the technical vocabulary present in the texts. At this level, students need to read prescribed materials and subject-related reference books. This makes a demand on their self-study skills and strategies. However, the students seem underprepared for advanced level reading. This problem needs to be addressed as inadequate reading skills hinder their progress in both academic and professional domains.

Research on strategy training

Research has shown that strategies play a crucial role in developing reading skills and that 'strategy training techniques actually work and produce more effective readers and thus strategies should be taught explicitly (Kern 1989; Moran and Williams 1993; Kong 2006; Aebersold and Field 2007; Karbalaei and Rajyashree 2010). In developing principles of L2 reading, Aebersold and Field (2007) show 'how effective reading strategies address both top-down and bottom-up dimensions of reading; help learners identify appropriate attitudes towards text and purposes for reading and develop readers' awareness of appropriate reading skills and strategies' (p. ix). Based on research in the area of strategy training and reading, an intervention was planned as part of the study focusing on developing reading skills through strategy training. The training involved the use of tasks and awareness-raising discussions using reflection grids. Though it has been established that explicit strategy training improves reading comprehension, the use of reflection grids to raise learners' awareness has not been explored in this area. Thus an attempt has been made in this study to use reflection grids for self-evaluation and to capture strategy use.

The study

It is posited that academic reading skills can be developed through a course that gives learners training in using reading strategies effectively, with the help of reading tasks, awareness-raising discussions and reflection grids. Base line information regarding learners' reading habits and problems related to reading comprehension was collected through learner and teacher questionnaires and interviews. Using this information, texts were carefully selected and tasks created. Self-reflection grids along with post-task discussion questions were also used.

Research procedure

The following steps were undertaken for the study:

- *Questionnaires* were administered to the target group to understand their reading habits, the kind of reading they needed to do and the reading strategies they were familiar with. The faculty was *interviewed* to elicit their views on the importance of reading and the problems students face due to inadequate reading skills.

- The target group was administered a *pre-test* to assess their reading proficiency in L1 and L2. Then a set of 15 students with intermediate to advanced level proficiency in L1 and basic to intermediate level of proficiency in L2 were selected from the 40 students who took the test.

- *Intervention:* The selected students were offered a special course (18 hours spread across 12 days, 1-2 hours per day) focusing on developing reading strategies through a wide variety of texts and tasks that were specifically designed for strategy training. Materials used were six modules each focusing on a reading strategy. A module consisted of reading texts (scientific texts from popular science) and tasks. The approach adopted was interactive and task-based. Here, the reading process and the strategy used were more important

than arriving at the right answer. Each module was divided into a pre-task discussion about the strategy in use and the nature of the texts and tasks; the actual completion of the reading and tasks; a post-task discussion about the reading processes and strategies used; and filling the reflection grids.

Research framework

The study operates on the premise that reading is a process involving the use of strategies that can be developed through sustained teaching and practice, and that explicit strategy instruction contributes significantly to reading proficiency. Figure 1 is a diagrammatic representation of the focus and methodology of the intervention carried out as part of the present study, and a description of it.

The existing knowledge of the learners, comprising the underlying L1 reading strategies they might have developed as proficient readers in L1 and their schemata, was tapped for the purpose of the study. This was done by selecting texts related to their field of study. Secondly, the tasks and the post-task discussions were designed to activate their schema and encourage them to read the texts critically, based on their background knowledge and by linking the new ideas presented in the texts with what they already knew, so as to facilitate the comprehension process. The intervention focused on explicit strategy training, which was done through reading tasks, awareness-raising post-task discussions and reflection grids. This led to conscious learning of strategies, and when the learners became conscious of the strategies they were using and the benefits of using them, they started applying them in the subsequent reading.

Analysis and interpretation of data from the pre-test and the post-test

A pre-test aimed at assessing learners' reading proficiency was administered. It had reading texts followed by MCQs, tasks on information transfer, comparison of two texts on the same topic, and short answer questions. The mean of the pre-test scores of the 15 selected students was 50.9%. A post-test aiming at assessing the result of the course and learners' achievement was conducted. It had pre-reading, while-reading and after-reading activities/tasks. The mean of the post-test was 66%. It is important to note that though the tasks in the post-test were of a higher order when compared to the pre-test there was improvement in the mean.

Interpretation of the data from the reflection grids

The study used reflection grids after each module to capture strategy use and to enable self-evaluation. The grids had general statements and statements specific to the strategy in use. Let us look at the data obtained from these grids.

Given below is a list of the strategies that were most preferred by the target group in order of priority (with an average % of learners who used the strategies across the six modules).

This list has been divided into three groups. Strategies in the first group are those that are important and were used by a significant number of learners. Some of

Figure 1
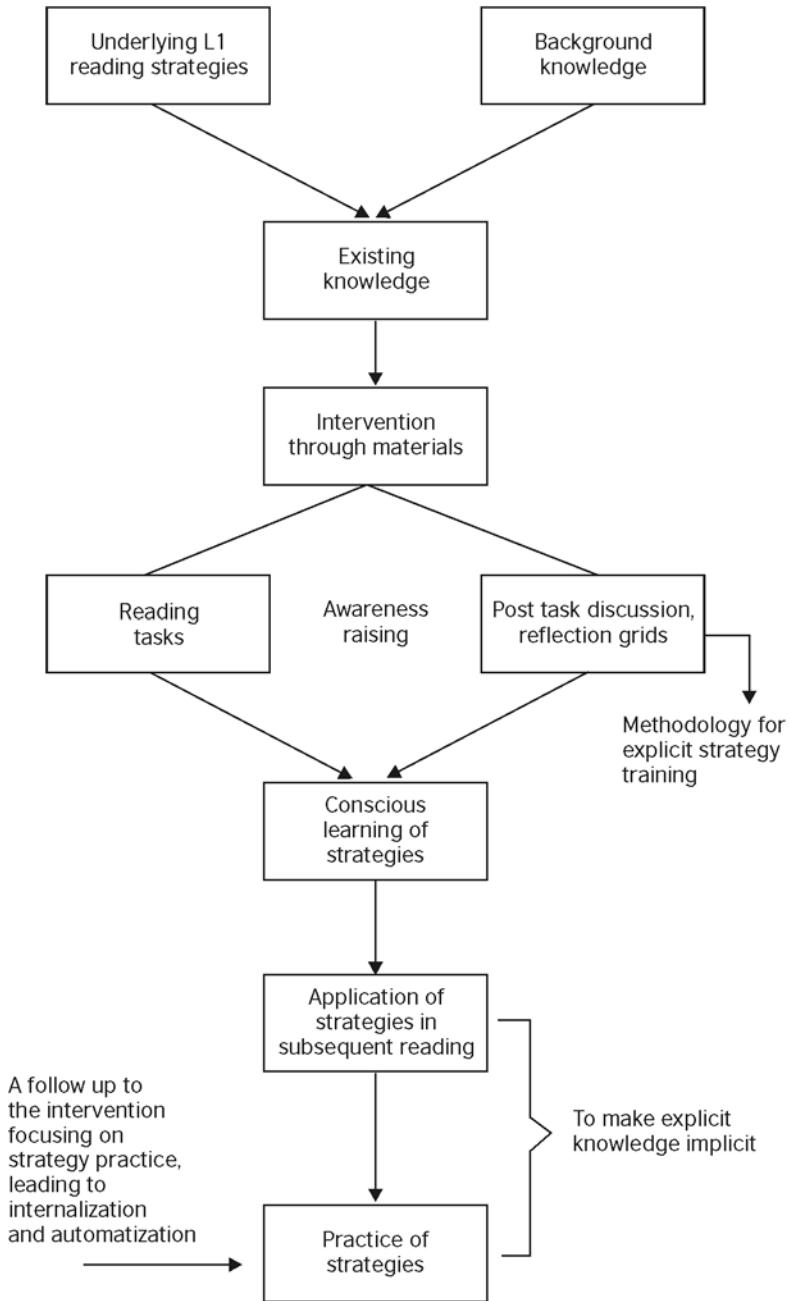
these strategies, like underlining, guessing, predicting and rereading were those that learners were subconsciously aware of. However, they couldn't match them with the purpose of reading. When they were guided to use these strategies for appropriate tasks through post-task discussions, their awareness became explicit and they made a conscious effort to use them across the modules. Thus, their strategy use improved with each module.

- Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context (100%)
- Predicting what the text is about by looking at the title (95.8%)
- Underlining the key points while reading (87.5%)
- Rereading the text several times, going back and forth to understand the text better (80%)
- Reading the text word by word at a slow pace to enable understanding (64%)
- Drawing inferences from the text with the help of the clues provided by the writer (61%)
- Trying to link the new ideas presented in the text with background knowledge or schemata while reading a text on a familiar topic (57%)

The strategies in the second set are those that they were not familiar with. They were made aware of them during the intervention. Though almost half of the learners could use them across the modules, in order to increase strategy use among other learners a follow-up is required. For instance, taking the help of linkers to understand text organization is a useful strategy. However, as learners were not aware of this earlier it took them some time to get used to this.

- Skipping some parts of the text that are not needed (53%)
- Looking for repetitive ideas and words in the text to understand the connection between different parts of the text (53%)
- Taking the help of linkers to understand the way a text is organized and to get a clear idea about arguments developed in the text (50%)
- Reading the entire text quickly once to get the gist and then reading paragraph by paragraph for deeper meaning (50%)

This set of strategies is important, yet their use was minimal. This might be due to the wrong notions that students had. For example, using L1 while reading in L2 was considered something that is done by learners with low proficiency. Thus, learners were not using strategies related to L1. It is important to make learners aware of the advantages of using L1 while reading in L2 so that they reconsider their opinions. Furthermore, reading in chunks is another important strategy that readers need to be using. Some of the students' unfamiliarity with the word or the notion chunk might have documented this % of strategy use while they could actually chunk better. In this case, giving these learners sustained practice and raising their awareness can lead to better results.

- Reading in chunks (47%)
- Translating words/sentences into Telugu while reading a text in English (33.3%)

- Reading the texts in English in the same way in which they read academic texts in their L1 (20%)

Thus, looking at this list one would realize that the first four strategies were the most preferred.

To sum up, after learners started using the strategies and experienced advantages such as improved reading comprehension and speed, they continued using the strategies in subsequent modules. This shows that when students are trained to use strategies explicitly, they can develop appropriate reading strategies and improve reading comprehension. It was interesting to note that all the learners used strategies like guessing the meaning and predicting frequently and more than 50% used the whole range of strategies. In addition, most of the learners liked the texts and the activities in the modules. This was because the texts were popular science articles related to topics familiar and interesting to them. Secondly, the learners found the activities engaging and interesting. In sum, the intervention helped the learners become aware of the important strategies to enhance the reading comprehension process thereby making reading effective.

Interpretation of the data from the structured interviews

After the intervention, four students who had participated actively during the study (from the first group in the pre-test and post-test table) were selected and interviewed. The interview aimed at collecting data related to their attitude towards the course, the texts, the tasks and the methodology used. All the students unanimously felt that the training was useful. They found the texts and tasks interesting and said that the post-task discussions helped them think about the process of reading in an intensive way.

The interviews captured three broad advantages of strategy training from the learners' perspective*:*

1. Improved reading comprehension

    Students unanimously said that their reading comprehension improved due to strategy training. Here are some of the statements by certain students that express this opinion.

    Rereading to understand the text better.

    Underlining key points was helpful in capturing the gist of the text which in turn helped in completing the tasks.

    Using background knowledge made reading effective.

    Awareness about text organization helped me improve my reading comprehension.

2. Improved reading speed and saved time

    All the students felt that their reading speed improved, thus helping them save time. They believed that these strategies would be helpful while reading

lengthy texts and preparing for and taking exams. Some of the specific statements made are as follows:

Skipping and reading in chunks saved time and improving reading speed. Predicting saves time.

3. Useful techniques to prepare for exams

Students said that the techniques like note making, summarizing and information transfer become useful while preparing for exams. The statements that capture their opinions are as follows:

Note making tables helped while summarizing. I will use this while preparing for exams as well.

Information transfer is a useful technique while preparing for exams.

The strategies they felt they had used the most were: skimming, scanning, guessing the meaning, rereading, underlining, note making, summarizing, looking for repetitive ideas, linking their schema with the new idea presented, chunking, inferencing and using illustrations to understand the text better. They said that strategy training definitely helps to improve reading skills, and the use of reflection grids makes them aware of the strategies to be used and their progress.

Thus, one can conclude that there is relative improvement in the students' reading skills from the pre-test to the post-test. Furthermore, students felt that their reading comprehension and reading speed improved through strategy training. Though the improvement may not be reflected significantly in all the cases, it validates to an extent the premise of the study that *a well-structured course focusing on strategy training will improve learners' academic reading skills.*

Findings

- Explicit strategy training can be done through reading tasks, awareness-raising discussions, and reflection grids.
- Explicit strategy training enhances academic reading skills, improves reading fluency and builds students' confidence to read and comprehend academic texts.
- Awareness raising using grids and discussions leads students to reflect on their reading processes (meta awareness).

Conclusion

To conclude, a specially designed course in strategy training results in improved reading performance. Self-reflection and self-evaluation enable learners to become better readers. Thus, learners need to be encouraged to reflect on their reading process. Teacher education courses need to include a module on strategy training to train teachers in using this approach to develop academic reading skills.

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Reciprocal teaching in a pre-service teacher education context

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Abstract

Like many students at school level, many students at the university level also have reading problems since they have very limited experience of engaging with a text directly. This becomes a big issue when the course demands reading academic texts for class discussion. This paper presents a study that was conducted in an intact MA, ELT class in Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Odisha to deal with this problem using reciprocal teaching as a classroom procedure. The scaffolding inherent in the procedure and later the clear role distribution involved in reciprocal teaching ensured learner participation and made this procedure effective. At the end of the short period of the study, learners were more participatory, more confident and showed improved comprehension of academic articles given to them to read. Not only this, in their response to the end-of-semester feedback questionnaire, reciprocal teaching was voted as the best classroom procedure. The study showed the potential that reciprocal teaching has in helping learners develop their comprehension skills.

Background

This paper reports a study that was conducted with the MA students of the department where I work. Some of the students of this course have opted for an ELT option paper which is spread over two semesters. They have completed their BA with English (Hons.) and like most teaching contexts in India, their learning experience includes reading literary texts that are exhaustively explained by the teachers with nearly no student engagement with these texts. As a result, both at school and at college level, these students have had practically no experience of engaging with the text directly. The system does not push them to read much either as it is possible for them to pass their examinations which generally involves answering essay-type questions using bazaar notes. These extremely simplified notes generally match the reading levels of the students and students do not make any effort to stretch their reading abilities. In general, this is the profile and reading ability of students who opt to specialize in Linguistics and ELT.

As students of an ELT course, they, however, had to do extensive reading of academic texts necessary for class discussion. Most of them found this difficult to cope with and only a few students could participate meaningfully in the discussion. As a result, the discussion very often happened to be one-sided with the teacher raising issues and offering solutions. Thus, this became another type of teacher

explanation though in a different format. The problem, therefore, was how to make the students of the ELT option course read.

The research questions were:

- How can we make the students of ELT courses read academic articles?
- Can reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown 1983) be used as a classroom procedure here?
- Can reciprocal teaching help students read and be more autonomous?

Reciprocal teaching defined

Reciprocal teaching (RT) is an instructional procedure which was initially suggested by Palincsar and Brown (1983) and later taken up by others. This is a procedure through which the teacher teaches the students cognitive strategies such as summarizing, clarification, prediction and a meta-cognitive strategy such as question generation. Since this procedure leads to improved reading comprehension and since teacher support is gradually withdrawn leaving students to work on their own, it may eventually result in learner autonomy. It was decided to use this procedure because the goal of education is to make the students eventually autonomous.

Explicit instruction of comprehension skills is not an easy process as there are several strategies that are difficult to define. However, six major functions seem to underline the comprehension skills. These are:

1. understanding the purposes of reading – both explicit and implicit
2. activating relevant background knowledge
3. allocating attention so that concentration can be focused on the major content at the expense of trivia
4. critical evaluation of content for internal consistency, and compatibility with prior knowledge and common sense
5. monitoring ongoing activities to see if comprehension is occurring, by engaging in such activities as periodic review and self-interrogation and
6. drawing and testing inferences of many kinds, including interpretations, predictions, and conclusions (Brown and Palincsar 1984).

RT focuses on four of these functions, that is, summarizing (self-review), questioning, clarifying and predicting. These four strategies focus on generation of comprehension as well as on monitoring of comprehension, thus include both cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies.

Procedure

The study was carried out in an intact class of 35 students, spread over eight one-hour classes. Two articles were used for this purpose, 'Grammar Teaching – Practice or Consciousness Raising?' (Ellis 2002) and 'The Writing Process and Process Writing' (Seow 2002). The rationale behind the selection was that these

were the articles the students were required to read at that point of time during their course work. There was no simplification of material as it was necessary to develop their ability to read texts of this level on their own. Thus, no specific change was made in the classroom or to the materials except to introduce RT.

To begin with, the students' background knowledge was activated by asking them to examine the title of the first article and then by asking them to think about the answer to the question: 'Should we teach grammar at all?' Following this discussion, I told them that I would use some strategies to make sense of the first paragraph and the second paragraph of the article. They were to follow what I was doing carefully as they would later have to take over from me. They were then asked to read the paragraph silently. At the end of the stipulated time, they were told that I would ask a question that a teacher or a test might ask them based on the two paragraphs that they had read. Similarly, I asked them to clarify certain things in the paragraph that I pretended were not clear to me, summarized the text and predicted what came next based on the paragraph we had read. I continued with the same procedure with the next two paragraphs since the students were not able to understand the procedure. I then assigned three paragraphs for them to read at home.

In the next class, I started with questions based on their reading at home. Since they needed clarification on several points we had to pause every now and then. Next, I divided the class into groups and nominated one student in each group to take over the role of the teacher. This student had to apply the four strategies to the paragraph assigned to them – asking a question(s) based on the text, summarizing, clarifying and predicting. As they worked in groups, I went around the class. The students were finding the text difficult and it was slow-going. I helped occasionally and at times had to model the strategies and redo their summaries. Although the students were not able to make a lot of progress, they were all actively involved.

Considering the problems the students had in the first class, I then used a modified procedure based on Dyer (2012) in the next class. The steps were as follows:

- Students were divided into groups of four.
- Each student in the group was given one note card, identifying that person's role as summarizer, questioner, clarifier and predictor.
- They were given the next two short paragraphs from the same article to read. They were encouraged to make notes to prepare themselves for their roles in the discussion.
- After they completed their reading, the student in the role of *summarizer* highlighted the key ideas in the reading.
- The *questioner* then posed questions about the unclear parts, puzzling information and connections to other concepts already learned.
- The *clarifier* addressed the confusing parts and attempted to answer the questions that were posed.

- The *predictor* offered predictions about what the author will tell the group next as far as it was possible.
- The roles in the group were then switched when the next paragraph was read.

The students were asked to use the prompts given for clarifying concepts such as 'Is there anything in this segment I don't understand?', 'What words or ideas need clarifying?', 'Which of these words am I not sure about', etc. This was specifically done to focus on monitoring their comprehension. My role was to guide and nurture the students' ability to use the four strategies successfully within the small group.

During the first class, I took notes on the proceedings of the class. But from the second class onwards, I used a tape recorder to record students' discussions only in individual groups because of the quality of the audio-recording. At the completion of each article, students were asked to answer comprehension questions based on the articles. This helped me to get an idea of the extent to which they had comprehended the article. Transcripts were then prepared based on the recordings of their discussions using RT. Finally, at the end of the semester, the students were asked to respond to a feedback questionnaire on the course in general.

Findings

A comparison between the students' responses to the comprehension questions based on the first article given on the third day and those based on the second article given on the eighth day showed an improvement in their reading comprehension. Improvement was measured in terms of the accuracy of their answers to oral questions asked in the class and the number of students who answered the questions with reasonable accuracy. The accuracy of language was not taken into consideration for this purpose since the focus was on comprehension. There was also an improvement in the strategy of questioning. A study of two sample transcripts showed their movement from 'missing the woods for the trees' to a reading from the whole to the parts. Some of the students who had the role of clarifier had already taken on a teacher role with confidence. The utterance *S1: 'Just read that sentence….. At the drafting stage, the writers are focused on the fluency of writing and are not preoccupied with grammatical accuracy or the neatness of the draft'* is extremely teacher-like. During class also, it was observed that the students in the group gave their full attention to the weaker students when they were in the role of the clarifier. The students became less tentative and more confident.

Students considered this procedure valuable as seen from their responses to the anonymous end-of-semester feedback questionnaire. Almost all the students mentioned RT as the most effective teaching technique learned during the semester. Most of them also said that they had gained confidence by doing this activity. However, students generally were not able to make successful predictions,

a strategy that seems to work very well with literary texts. This could be because of their lack of adequate background knowledge regarding academic text types.

Why was RT successful with the students? There could be several reasons for this. The students gradually developed familiarity with the procedure over time. This procedure required them to do a deeper processing of what they read and engage in making sense of that information. They had a conscious of need for debugging – so they did additional reading and searching. In addition to these, the work was done while working in supportive groups. The classroom dynamics helped them to slide into their roles with confidence. Finally, the problems of the students were not reading problems but comprehension problems. RT addressed the issue of comprehension fostering processes, hence it worked well with them.

Some problems

Summarizing is a crucial part of RT and the assumption is that students know how to summarize what they read. However, the students in this study had no training in summarizing at any of their earlier levels of language learning. Using an Explicit Teaching before Reciprocal Teaching format (Rosenshine and Meister 1994) and including summarizing procedures as suggested in Brown and Day (1983) in advance would have made RT more effective. Another problem was that sometimes it was difficult for me to hold myself back from taking over when students were having problems formulating questions or working out strategies to get the co-operation of their class mates. It was difficult not to intervene when students made mistakes or even sometimes to accept incorrect answers. This was probably the biggest challenge for me as a teacher. To lead, help, support and then gradually fade away are skills that we as teachers need to learn and practise.

In conclusion it can be said that RT as a classroom procedure can help develop the reading skills of the students, promote student autonomy as well as give the teachers ample opportunities for professional development, which is an integral part of being effective teachers.

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Modifying ELT tasks to include the blind/visually impaired: an exploration at the tertiary level

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Abstract

Tasks used in the language classroom normally have visual inputs and/or stimulus. Such tasks exclude blind/visually impaired students as they do not perceive them fully. An attempt is made in this paper to explore the possibilities of changes that can be made to tasks so that inclusiveness is realized. The study has implications for minimizing exclusion of the blind/visually impaired students and facilitating their participation in the tasks with modes that are comfortable, meaningful and useful.

Background to the study

English is the language of economic and social mobility; in multilingual countries such as India the orientation in the English classroom has been towards communicative language teaching. Accordingly, most classes and syllabuses use tasks to enable such communication. Tasks expect learners to comprehend and manipulate information provided in order to create text which expresses what they need to say succinctly (Nunan 2004). The purpose of many of these tasks, which focus on meaning making, is also to enable the learning of the forms of language (Prabhu 1987: 28).

At the tertiary level, students need to be able to use language to describe objects and events from alternating perspectives, and more importantly, 'read' and describe figures and graphs to write reports. Twenty-first-century inclusive education policy has brought lots of children with physical and sometimes cognitive disabilities into tertiary education with the deliberate intention of reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. The policy document also mandates 'changes and modification in approaches and strategies'. And more importantly, it demands that inputs, processes and environments should be modified to 'foster learning both at the level of the learner in his/her learning environment and at the system level to support the entire learning experience' (UNESCO).

However, the tasks that are used in most English classrooms exclude a wide variety of students, particularly those who are disabled. The blind/visually impaired are denied the facilities to interact with tasks that have visual stimuli, and to read graphs and figures and interpret them.

In the Integrated Masters' Programme at the University of Hyderabad (IMP henceforth) English is taught as a skill-based subject using tasks. Some of the students, particularly those who are blind/visually impaired who are registered for this programme, however, are not able to engage completely with the tasks because it involves visual interpretation of stimulus material. This paper is an attempt to describe and critique the 'inclusive' modifications made in some of these tasks.

Student profile

The students of IMP in general, and the blind/visually impaired (BVI henceforth) in particular, join the university after having completed their 10+2 years of schooling and are admitted into the programme through a national level entrance examination (and an interview in some disciplines). The present number of students enrolled is more than 200 across various disciplines. All of them need to study English in their first two semesters as a compulsory course. The students are placed at different levels of proficiency after their performance is assessed through a screening test. The Centre for English Language Studies (CELS) teaches this course. There are about eight groups of students every semester. And last year as many as fourteen students belonged to the visually-impaired category. The idea is to help them adjust to mainstream education through inclusion. Most of these students have studied in special schools for the blind till grade 12, and having joined the university aspire to earn their master's degree after five years of full-time study in their respective disciplines. The levels of visual disability in these students range from total to partial.

As part of the English syllabus all students are expected to interpret graphs, use appropriate vocabulary to express what is given in them, and write descriptive essays. At the university able-bodied students and BVI students are taught in the same classroom; the only 'modification' is that BVI students have access to a separate dedicated computer laboratory with assistive software. The mode of interaction in the English language classes is through PowerPoint presentations, augmented by handouts when needed. Pair and group work is the usual norm. As per university specifications soft copies of all handouts and PowerPoint presentations are provided in advance to all BVI students, but this has not enabled full participation.

Experiment with tasks

The second semester (January to May 2013) class that I taught consisted of 22 students of which five were blind/visually impaired, one was also hearing impaired, and one partially sighted. This formed more than 24% of the entire class. These students are the subjects of the study.

Teacher development courses do not provide workable solutions for inclusive education even though it is mandated policy. The teacher has to use their gut/ impressionistic judgements to enable such inclusiveness in classroom transaction. Very often, either the 'normal' or the 'impaired' group has to suffer. In the

ESL writing classroom, all students have to use prepositions of location and appropriate vocabulary to compose descriptive essays. Most tasks in a general classroom are primarily visual in nature or rely on visual input. They therefore exclude BVI students and do not allow them to comprehend, manipulate or interact with the medium. This further prevents them from mobilizing their schema, conveying meaning or manipulating form in a communicative task. Such exclusion is not deliberate, but however unplanned or incidental, it is debilitating for them. This does not mean that a fresh set of tasks needs to be created for them. With some modifications and additional inputs, the learning experiences of BVI students can be enhanced. For them, tactile and auditory stimuli make more sense than mere visual stimuli or verbal descriptions.

Descriptive tasks

All students are required to learn to write descriptive paragraphs and then learn to write essays. For BVI students this becomes difficult for two reasons. Firstly, they can either 'write' on the computer or in Braille, or replace 'writing' with speech if they are not proficient in either Braille or the computer. They can also make use of scribes, but in the current classroom context scribes are not available. Secondly, the description itself becomes very demanding because the inputs are visual.

As a stimulus and as a pre-task, all students were put into different groups and were asked to think of an item and write down words that described a mystery object that they had in mind as a group. The groups had BVI students and were instructed to think of an item that the BVI students could hear and touch-and-feel (such as a twig or an item in their bag/classroom). The items were put in a bag so that the other groups and able-bodied students could not see the item. Then the groups were assigned a speaker and a writer each. In order to 'solve' the problem of the non-availability of a scribe, in every group, care was taken to ensure that the speaker was a BVI student and the writer an able-bodied student. The groups were instructed to use only descriptive words related to smell, tactile feeling, size, shape, components, etc. and not the actual names of the objects. Then the speakers of the group would 'speak out' the words and phrases related to the object. The other groups/members were encouraged to guess the object and if needed ask descriptive questions at any point of time, but all of them had to do this by both raising their hand and clicking their fingers. This went on till the object was identified. Later the 'collected' words and phrases were converted into a paragraph or a descriptive essay. As a connected task, the same object was given to all the groups (the students did not know this) and the task repeated. In the end the objects were exchanged along with descriptions and it was revealed that the same object was given to all the groups. This led to a comparison of descriptions across groups and an exchange of the vocabulary choices made.

Nature of inclusions

The BVI students felt comfortable with this task for a couple of reasons. First, they got to touch, feel, smell and hear the sound of the target object to be described instead of relying on other people's descriptions. This led to more descriptive

words being generated (in terms of smell, tactile feeling, size, shape, etc.). In their own words, they felt *included, contributory and useful* during the exercise. As one participant put it: 'The first class that I enjoyed was the class 1 day you showed some twigs to me and my friends and told us to compare them we absorved [sic] a laught [sic] of differences bitwin [sic] other comparisons and my comparison. So far I haven't come across such a class in my life time.' Another student corroborated: 'Other class which I liked is when madam brought those twigs in to the class and asked us to describe them. I liked it because firstly I even don't know about the tree which madam showed and secondly I have learnt some words which are used for describing things.' One student passionately observed: 'How can I forget the class with some twigs and plants you brought and started teaching comparison probabully [sic] this my favoret [sic] class.' Another student was even able to go 'meta' on his experience and talk about the twig class, that he liked it because 'when we speak, we don't use the same language which we use for describing an object. This class helped me to learn some new expressions used to describe an object.' If tactile, olfactory and auditory senses are exploited, then descriptions can become meaningful to BVI students.

Vocabulary learning

All students are required to learn vocabulary. The specific items in discussion here are the words that are related to running or walking, for example, crawl, creep, drag, inch, plod, slide, slither, tiptoe, amble, sprint, dart, rush, zip, zoom, dash, hurry, race and whiz. An understanding of the minute differences between these terms is mainly through sight for able-bodied students. This creates obvious problems for BVI students. These words were written on the board while being spelt out at the same time, and each one of them was demonstrated by total physical response. For example, the teacher held the hands of each BVI student and jogged while offering a description of what and how she was pacing and placing her steps in order for the student to comprehend the meaning of the word. This was done on a one-to-one basis. The other words were compared and contrasted to bring out the similarities and the differences. The follow-up task was to write paragraphs or sentences using these words in groups and then reading them out to the rest of the class. As in the previous task, this too had a writer and a speaker.

 All the students, including the non-BVI ones, understood the nuances and the subtle differences in the meanings of the words through the use of TPR. The BVI students were comfortable and found the task useful. As one student observed, 'the first day of my English class you made me feal [sic] free and allowed me to express mycelf [sic] and u even taught me the action words by performing actions along with me. This attitude helped everyone to understand the verb words like run, sit, jog, so on.' Another student added, 'I learnt many things from the class regarding action words in the bigining [sic] I don't no [sic] the meaning of all these words, but after your inspiring class I came to no [sic] all the words by action you showed all the action performing I like the class the most.'

TPR-integrated activities allow BVI students to comprehend, internalize and scaffold the new words that are learnt as part of the syllabus in an inclusive classroom.

A similar exercise was used to teach prepositions. An empty carton box and a special ball for BVI learners were used to demonstrate prepositions by placing the ball in the appropriate position vis-à-vis the carton. The students received this task well. One student observed that 'class which I liked was when madam taught prepositions using a practical example. I liked that class because as a visually challenged student, we can understand easily by practical examples. This class has given me the exact picture of using those prepositions' [sic].

Transfer of information to graphs

Special tactile aids were used to ensure non-exclusion. BVI students were made to understand the concept of graphs through embossed aids using thread for lines to be strung around drawing board pins for points. Like the other students in class, I expected BVI students to respond using the aids used.

They were able to do so, during the group activity that followed, and not only responded with the help of the aid but also made a presentation. Similarly during the teaching of percentiles using pie graphs a pie plate was used; a similar string instead of colours was used to indicate percentiles. The centre bulb was the centre of the pie chart and the string was made to pass through it as it wound around the bulb. This ensured 'minimum exclusion'. In the words of one of the students, 'Our teacher ensured that none of us were excluded in anything she taught us. The special effort and care to develop the tools helped us to stay as equals with my friends. Though we have Tailor board, we find that these tools and classes helped us learn the way our normal friends do. She insisted that we be equal that's all!'

The Government of India (GOI) order no. 1139 seems to still follow a policy of exclusion, although all education policy documents refer to inclusive education. It states: 'All Visually Impaired students are exempt from drawing or interpreting graphs.' With a little tactile assistance, this exclusion can be easily eradicated.

Conclusion

Inclusive education cannot end with a few sentences in policy documents. Even the allotting of funds is not going to solve the problem. An overall empathetic approach with a specific focus on the 'learning how to learn' pattern of education is required and this alone can make classrooms inclusive. Students need to feel included and made responsible for their own learning.

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English language teacher educators' feedback experience as a teaching-learning tool in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study sought to find out English language teacher educators' knowledge of feedback, and the type and quality of feedback they utilize with their teacher trainees. A purposive sampling technique was used to select two out of four teacher training institutions in the state while a random sampling technique was used to select 250 respondents (50 teacher educators and 200 teacher trainees) from the two institutions. Three research questions guided the study while two null hypotheses were tested. Two sets of researcher-made and validated questionnaires were used in collecting data for the study. The result of the study indicated that teacher educators do not have a clear knowledge of what constitutes feedback. While they claimed to use different modes and good quality feedback, their teacher trainees disagreed. It is recommended that teacher educators be exposed through workshops to knowledge of what constitutes feedback and how to implement it as an innovation to achieve national curricular goals of teacher education.

Introduction

In any teaching and learning situation, teachers desire that their students acquire the objectives of the curriculum. Hence, they employ various techniques and strategies along with cutting-edge media resources. In order to find out whether they have reached their curriculum goals, teachers often generate information about students' progress using a variety of methods – class work, tests/assessments, questioning and observation. As they mark students' work or interact with them orally, data is generated. Reviewing and reflecting on students' data/feedback provides teachers with insight into learning progress and helps identify the gaps which require appropriate actions to close. Students for their part appreciate it when teachers point out what they need to do to acquire skills, attitudes and knowledge. When specific errors are pointed out with information on how to make improvements, it makes it easier for students to learn. Thus, when feedback enables teachers to tailor their teaching and points the way for students to improve their performance, it becomes both a teaching and a learning tool.

Literature is replete with success stories involving the effective use of feedback

in teaching/learning situations (Bransford, Brown and Cocking 2000; Marzano, Pickering and Pollock 2001; Hattie 2008; Mazur 2009). It has also been indicated in the literature that frequent high stakes assessment lowers students' motivation for learning. This is because high stakes assessment focuses on grades/marks rather than on refocusing students on the course concerned.

In spite of the potential for feedback facilitating teaching and learning, not much has been reported in this regard in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom state. Experience indicates that what is claimed to be feedback is actually marking and returning students' work. Not many teachers deem it necessary to let students know how they are performing. Even continuous assessment which was meant to monitor students' progress with a view to closing yawning gaps is being abused by many teachers at the tertiary level as some of them delay continuous assessment and make it part of the final exam. Thus, students are denied the opportunity of learning from their mistakes and prevented from improving their performance. Where then lies the motivation for learning? And how can such teachers understand students' learning difficulties and adapt their teaching accordingly?

Teacher education programmes aim to produce educators who are academically and professionally well-groomed to be able to translate theory into practice and vice versa (Osuji 2009: 298). The *National Policy on Education* [NPE], which serves like a blueprint for education for the nation and stipulates the aims and objectives of education for each level, addresses teacher education in section 8b and lists five goals. Among the goals are that teachers should be highly motivated, have the spirit of enquiry and creativity with the necessary intellectual and professional background as well as being adaptable to changing situations. These qualities are to be learned from their teacher educators in the course of their professional preparation. This means that the educators themselves must possess these qualities and should adapt easily to any changing situation in the course of their work.

Teachers at the university and College of Education are seen as models. Their feedback practice would influence their teacher trainees. It is, however, doubtful whether English language teacher educators understand the concept of feedback and do incorporate it into their curricular practices.

Continuous assessment is an innovation in the Nigerian education system. Prior to its introduction learners waited till the end of the term or the end of the year before being assessed. At that time learners did not benefit nor did they learn from their mistakes because feedback was not forthcoming. Obviously, formative assessment that provides lots of feedback and opportunities for students to use the feedback leads to better achievement and enhanced performance (Wiggins 2012).

In view of the preceding observations, it does seem that teachers' knowledge of feedback is questionable. It must be noted that the first step towards implementing any innovation lies in the proper understanding of the concept involved. This

study is undertaken to explore English language teacher educators' knowledge of feedback and practices in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria.

Concept, purpose and types of feedback

Teaching and learning aim at achieving specific goals. While learners strive to reach their goals, they constantly need information on how well they are doing on the course. Such information must be descriptive enough to point them on the way to achieving their goals. Thus, feedback is not advice, evaluation or judgement, neither is it grades as these cannot possibly tell the learners what to do the next time to improve their performance. Feedback is information a learner receives on how he/she is doing in his/her efforts to reach the desired goal. Thus, the purpose of feedback is to help students develop their understanding and improve their performance in relation to the expected standard. Feedback should identify the gap between expected outcome and current achievement and provide assistance on how to close the gap. When feedback functions this way, scholars prefer to regard it as 'feedforward' because it is future work that would be improved.

Unfortunately, in Nigeria the story is different. Teacher educators and teachers do not seem to realize the potential role of feedback in the teaching-learning situation. At the teacher education level, teacher trainees receive very little information on how they are progressing. Emphasis is placed on teaching to cover the syllabus and not on whether students are learning or not. Everyone seems to ignore the fact that teaching less and providing more feedback can produce greater learning (Mazur 2009).

There are different types of feedback a teacher can use. It can be a demonstration of a skill, a discussion, or the teacher may decide to engage the students in conversation individually or in groups. What determines the type of feedback used is the level of the learners involved and the purpose it will serve. Feedback can be given in small groups or large groups. It can come from oneself or peers as an ongoing process of learning. It can come from teachers. It can be given as comments on the work, in a feedback sheet and even online. Feedback dialogue, where students not only receive feedback but also have the opportunity to engage in discussion about the feedback, can be used. Feedback can be formal or informal.

Equally important in feedback practice is the need to train students to develop the same evaluative skills as their teachers. Scholars have stressed the need for teachers to also focus their efforts on strengthening the skills of self-assessment in their students (Yorke 2003; Boud 2000). When feedback practice puts learners at the centre, they will be actively involved in the learning process thereby monitoring and regulating their own performance.

ICT and feedback practice in Nigeria

ICT has actually revolutionized teaching and learning by transferring power from teachers to learners, and increased access to quality education. In spite of all the

benefits that ICT holds for the improvement of classroom interaction, there seems to be no meaningful application of this technology in the classrooms (Salisu 2003 cited in Anekwe and Ifeakor 2004). The challenges in integrating ICT into the Nigerian classrooms include lack of knowledge and skills, non-availability of ICT facilities, power outage, poor funding and management problems (Abolade and Yusuf 2005; Udosen 2008).

A study conducted to find out how literate English language teachers were in ICT, its availability and utilization in teaching and learning in Akwa Ibom state secondary schools, discovered that most teachers were not ICT literate, that ICT facilities were not available in schools and so teachers could not use them (Udosen 2008).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to find out English language teacher educators' knowledge of and feedback practice in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria.

Research questions

Two research questions guided the study.

1. What is the English language teacher educators' knowledge of feedback?
2. What is the type of feedback used by teacher educators?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were tested for the study.

1. There is no significant mean difference in the responses of teacher educators and teacher trainees regarding the type and quality of feedback used.
2. English language teacher educators do not differ significantly from their trainees with regard to the technology used in feedback practice.

Method

The Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria was created in 1987 with about eight core ethnic groups. There are six tertiary institutions in the state but only two train English language teachers for the state and nation. The population of the study comprised all 68 teacher educators and all 245 in years two and three from the two teacher training institutions. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the two institutions while a simple random sampling technique was used to select the teachers and teacher trainees. That brought the sample size to 50 English language teacher educators and 200 teacher trainees.

Two sets of questionnaires, tagged English Language Teacher Educators' Feedback Experience Questionnaire (ELTEFEQ) and English Language Teacher Trainees Feedback Experience Questionnaire (ELTTEQ) and developed by the researchers, comprised 27 items while the trainees had 23 items all measuring the major variables of the study. The respondents were requested to indicate their opinion on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) (4), Agree (A) (3),

Disagree (D) (2) and Strongly Disagree (SD) (1) on positive items, and the reverse for negative items. The benchmark was 2.5 and above. The instruments were face validated by two experts in the department of Educational Foundations majoring in measurement and evaluation. Their comments were used to modify the items. The instrument was then trial tested on a sample of 20 teacher educators and trainees who were not part of the main study. Cronbach Alpha procedure was used to ascertain the internal consistency reliability of the instruments, which yielded .93 for the teachers and .72 for the trainees. The validated instruments were personally administered to the respondents by the researchers in the two institutions. Data collected was analysed using mean and t-test statistics.

Results

The results of the study are presented in tables in accordance with the research questions and null hypotheses.

Research question 1: What is the English language teacher educator's knowledge of feedback?

Table 1: Knowledge of feedback by English language teacher educators

Knowledge of feedback Items	N	Sum	Mean	S.D
Grading students' work (score) A+B+ etc.	50	157.00	3.1400	1.01035
Providing praise on strengths	50	156.00	3.1200	.68928
Providing criticism on weak points (e.g. poor work)	50	130.00	2.6000	1.03016
Describing what students need to do next time for improvement	50	162.00	3.2400	.74396
Feedback is the same as knowledge of result (KOR)	50	141.00	2.8200	.77433
Overall	50	746.00	14.9200	2.62515

Table 1 indicates that teacher educators' knowledge of feedback includes grading students' work, offering praise on strengths and criticizing weak points, as well as feedback being the same as knowledge of the results. Their positive ratings of these negative items indicate that they do not have a clear knowledge of feedback.

Research question 2: What types of feedback do teacher educators use?

Table 2: Result of descriptive statistics on types of feedback used by English teacher educators

Types of feedback used Items	N	Sum	Mean	S.D
I grade students' work once	50	124.00	2.4800	1.14713
I give comments orally	50	132.00	2.6400	1.02539
I write comments on students' work	50	169.00	3.3800	.53031
I give specific comments on students' errors	50	173.00	3.4600	.50346
I give specific suggestions for improvement	50	181.00	3.6200	.49031
I train students to self-assess their work	50	142.00	2.8400	.84177
Fellow students are trained to peer assess work	50	119.00	2.3800	.90102
Overall	50	1040.00	20.8000	3.06394

Table 2 shows that teacher educators give feedback orally and in written form. They also give specific comments on students' errors, give specific suggestions for improvement, and train students to assess themselves. They however do not grade students' work all at once and do not use peer assessment.

Null hypothesis 1: There is no significant mean difference in the responses of teacher educators and their trainees regarding the type of feedback used.

Table 3: t-test analysis of the mean difference in the responses of teacher educators and trainees on types of feedback used

Variable	Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Cal
Response on feedback type	Trainee	200	16.41	4.14	
	Trainer	50	20.80	3.06	-7.04*

* Significant at .05; Critical-t = 1.972; df=248

Table 3 shows that t-cal of 7.04 was greater than crit-t of 1.972 at .05 alpha level. The null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant mean difference between teacher educators and their trainees regarding the type of feedback used.

Null hypothesis 2: English language teacher educators do not differ significantly from their trainees on the technology used in feedback practice.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean difference in the responses of teacher educators and trainees on technology used in feedback

Variable	Respondent	N	Mean	S. D	t-Cal
Response on Technology	Trainee	200	5.57	2.19	.55
	Trainer	50	5.38	1.89	

Significant at .05; Critical-t = 1.972; df=248

Table 4 shows that t-cal of .55 is less than crit–t of 1.972. Based on this result we retain null hypothesis 2.This means that both teacher educators and teacher trainees are agreed that technology is not used in their feedback practice.

Discussion of the findings

Table 1 contains the finding of this study on teacher educator's knowledge of feedback where they rated the negative items highly showing that they do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes feedback. This finding indicates that many teacher educators do not understand what feedback is (Hattie 2008).

On the type of feedback used, the teacher educators' rating of the items in Table 2 shows that they use different modes in giving feedback. This again is reflected in Table 3 where their mean rating is significantly higher than the teacher trainees. The teacher trainees do not seem to agree with the type of feedback the teacher educators claim to use. Teachers do not feel confident using self and peer assessment whereas these skills should be encouraged (Yorke 2003; Boud 2000).

On the issue of technology, the teacher educators and their trainees are agreed that they do not use them. This finding corroborates earlier studies (Salisu 2003, cited in Anekwe and Ifeakor 2004) that technology has not been adequately integrated into our school system largely due to teachers' ICT illiteracy as well as the non-availability of these facilities.

It is worth noting that in the course of this study the researchers encountered some teacher educators who totally lack knowledge of feedback and those who know what constitutes feedback but fail to incorporate it in their teaching. This accounts for the variance in the responses of teacher educators and their trainees in most of the variables examined and demonstrates a clear gap between theory and practice.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, we can safely conclude that the English language teacher educators used in this study do not fully understand what feedback is. They, however, acknowledge the availability of types of feedback but fail to incorporate it into their teaching practice. It is disappointing to discover that technology has no place in feedback practice in teacher training. One wonders how their trainees will function in the system in this digital age.

Recommendations

1. Workshops should be organized for teacher trainers on what constitutes feedback and how to incorporate it in their teaching practice to achieve curricular goals.

2. The issue of integrating technology into curricular practice should be given attention to at the tertiary level if the ripple effect must reach the lower levels.

3. Teacher educators should provide models for their teacher trainees on the use of feedback to monitor teaching and learning goals through proper administration of continuous assessment.

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The use of observation – feedback cycles as a method of teachers' continuous professional development in the context of TE:ST

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Abstract

Observation of teachers is a very common occurrence in schools but is less frequently connected with effective feedback. In order to be effective, feedback needs to be specific, actionable, constructive and timely. Feedback is more successful when part of an ongoing process in order to allow for changes to occur and a sense of achievement to build, thus leading to increased motivation and further change.

This paper explores the use and effectiveness of observation and feedback in the context of TE:ST (Total Evaluation : School Transformation), an evaluation service carried out by Destiny Education (DE), Mumbai in Victoria Falls School (name changed). Forty-nine teachers from pre-school to high school were observed and given feedback at least twice within a period of six months.

TE:ST involved an initial evaluation of the school, including observation of teachers with feedback, interviews, questionnaires and evaluation of documents. A report was then written. Using these recommendations, along with input from school management, a school development plan (SDP) was formulated. The paper concludes with suggestions for improvements to future iterations of the programme.

Introduction

TE:ST (Total Evaluation : School Transformation) is an evaluation service carried out by Destiny Education (DE), Mumbai. One of the aims of TE:ST is to ensure that observations are not only useful for whole school evaluation, but also for each individual teacher's development. The observations inform specific feedback, which in turn informs an individual's professional development.

Observation in the context of appraisal
Jones (1993) cited in Tilstone (1998) points out that although classroom observation is just one data-gathering process, it is a crucial aspect of evaluation. Carthew (1988) perceptively states that observation is essential to support a teacher, and provide relevant and useful training. It is hard to know how a teacher needs to develop unless evaluation has occurred. This could be in the form of self-evaluation by the teacher or observation by another person. Third-party

observation can often add greater insight and clarity to a teacher's own self-evaluation. TE:ST provided this third-party evaluation.

Most school appraisal systems include both self-evaluation and third-party evaluation, and are conducted in a cyclical format. In fact observation and feedback are most frequently referenced as part of appraisal cycles. Whilst the evaluation aspect of TE:ST is not cyclical, the input phase after the SDP includes cyclical observation and feedback sessions.

According to Goddard and Emerson (1992) there are two types of appraisal: the staff development model and the accountability model. Goddard and Emerson themselves question whether the two methods are compatible, concluding that because of the teacher's different perspectives and attitudes to each method; it would be near to impossible. When teachers are appraised for accountability, especially when tied to promotion or salary, they make sure they are presenting their best. Lessons are planned and executed to impress the observer. Students are warned to be on their best behaviour and teachers can tend to 'play safe' (Tilstone 1998). On the contrary, when lessons are observed for development a teacher feels less need to impress. There is no longer the pressure of external reward or failure. As teachers feel a part of the process they are more likely to experiment with new methods, developing their skills, knowing that if it doesn't work or mistakes are made, it is not going to cost them their jobs. Development is only going to occur when new strategies are implemented and teaching changes. This highlights the dilemma of TE:ST. Whilst we at DE promote teacher development and see it as an essential part of TE:ST, it is argued that observation towards both accountability and development cannot happen at the same time and be effective. Principals and management often appear to be more concerned with the accountability and 'grading' of their teachers.

Observation process
Carthew (1988) indicates that 'repeated or multiple observations will clearly be more productive and representative'. Poster and Poster (1991) claim that the first observation should be of a more general focus and the second more specific. TE:ST (pre-SDP), however, conducts a minimum of two observations per teacher and both are general. This enables us to obtain an informed, triangulated base line on which to build. TE:ST (pre-SDP) consists of one known (date and time told in advance) and one unknown observation. The resulting comparison shows us what a teacher is capable of when time, effort and thought have been put into the lesson (known) as opposed to everyday reality (unknown). This then raises the question not of ability but of motivation.

Whether observation is carried out 'in-house' or by outsiders it is essential, as Tilstone (1998) indicates, that the atmosphere is positive, supportive and based on mutual trust. An initial meeting between the observer and teachers before the observation would aid this process greatly. An introductory meeting would help move the teachers away from feeling apprehensive, watched and judged, to knowing that we are there to help and work alongside them towards improvement.

Preconceived ideas of observations and expectations often influence teachers' attitudes and performance.

Much has been written about the actual mechanics of classroom observation. Goddard and Emerson (1992), Tilstone (1998) and Wragg (1999) all talk extensively about the position of the observer, whether they participate or just watch, and even how the observer dresses. During TE:ST we try to gain, as far as possible, an accurate picture of what normally happens in the classroom, although we realise we are not invisible, and therefore may influence the students and teacher.

Study

The TE:ST (Total Evaluation : School Transformation) process was carried out by Destiny Education (DE) in Victoria Falls School (name changed). Each teacher (49 teachers from pre-school to high school) was observed and given feedback at least twice within a period of six months. TE:ST included an initial evaluation of the school, including observation of teachers with feedback, interviews, questionnaires and evaluation of documents. A report was then written. Using these recommendations, along with input from school management, a school development plan (SDP) was formulated.

The majority of our observation recording during TE:ST was qualitative; most of the time we looked at an overview rather than specific traits of a lesson. This allowed for a more open discussion with the teacher during the feedback phase. It was then possible to gain insight into the teacher's philosophy as she explained why something occurred, the context and circumstances.

Before trainers/observers used the TE:ST form, each section was explained and explanatory notes provided for future reference (see Appendix). These notes acted as prompts as suggested by Goddard and Emerson (1992). The form covers eight sections, and observers wrote as much or as little detail as they wished. The purpose of the explanatory notes was to ensure that observations conducted by DE were standard regardless of who the observer was. This was essential in order to provide consistency between observers.

Wragg (1999) talks about our own subjective perception, personal views of quality and effectiveness, as well as our pre-supposed ideas and values. However, when I reflect on the assumptions of the teachers we observed and their views of 'good' and 'effective' education I realise there is considerable discrepancy – not in theory, but in practice. During TE:ST we found that many teachers were able to give the answers we expected with regard to attitudes and skills of a teacher. However, when observing the teachers in action, the difference between the known theory and the practical outworking was vast. The teachers may have known what they were 'meant' to do, yet they appeared to find it incredibly difficult to translate this into practice. Therefore the required development was not about teaching more theory but enabling the teachers to gain practically the skills and techniques required to put theory into practice.

Goddard and Emerson (1992) clearly state that both the teacher and the observer need to be open about classroom expectations. This was not facilitated by DE in TE:ST on this occasion. On reflection, this needs to be integrated into TE:ST in the future. During the pre-observation meeting, time must be spent finding out the teachers' classroom expectations and sharing DE's expectations where additional or different.

Whilst it was not possible within the constraints of TE:ST (pre-SDP) to complete whole appraisal cycles, an effort at triangulation was made by using student, teacher and parent questionnaires alongside observations. Campell and Fiske (1959) cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 141) state that 'Triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity particularly in qualitative research'. As recommended by Denzin, referred to in Salkind (2010), we used investigator triangulation (more than one observer) and methodological triangulation (same method used on more than one occasion).

DE's TE:ST effectively fulfilled Montgomery and Hadfield's (1989: 98) other purposes for appraisal schemes:

1. improving the lines of communication
2. increasing managerial awareness
3. creating a more 'open' school ethos
4. identifying in-service requirements
5. improving teacher standards
6. developing whole school initiatives.

Although DE personnel were initially unknown to the school staff, they appeared to 'improve communication', providing teachers with the chance to speak out during feedback sessions, and allowing them to voice difficulties or suggestions. These were passed on to management, fulfilling the second point 'increasing managerial awareness'. TE:ST very much fulfils points four and six in the formation of the report and SDP. At the end of the six months all observation reports were analysed to ascertain common in-service training requirements. These were then incorporated into the recommendations which subsequently informed the SDP, thus fulfilling point six. Point five is a longer-term project and only when TE:ST is fully taken into the post-SDP stage is this adequately fulfilled.

Feedback process

Observers are constantly trying to balance positive and negative feedback. During TE:ST we found that unless teachers were given written points, many of them could not remember what was discussed, let alone make any changes to their teaching. We tried to put more positive points than areas to improve.

In order to fulfil ethical considerations, it was clearly stated at the beginning of TE:ST that copies of observation forms and feedback slips would be given only to the concerned teacher, school management and DE.

Feedback should be given as soon as possible. Green and Sanders (1990) indicate that it should be within forty-eight hours of the observation. They also feel that the teacher should be given a copy of the observation form before the meeting in order to read and assimilate the points. Whilst DE always gave the feedback within forty-eight hours, the form was only given during the meeting itself. Time was given during the meeting for the teacher to read it and ask for clarification if needed, before any comments were made by the observer. We found this reduces any misunderstandings that the written word, given in advance, could cause. In fact, the observer often asked for the teacher's thoughts about the lesson before even beginning their own feedback. Explanations were often all a teacher needed, but without these they tended to interpret from their own possibly widely different assumptions, which sometimes then led to misunderstandings and breaks in communication and relationship.

Observing a number of teachers in a short space of time during TE:ST gave us a general feel for the level of experience and exposure of the teachers within the school. Accordingly, we were then able to form a 'baseline evaluation' and therefore work with 'value-added' rather than absolute expectations.

Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from this study can be categorised under Danielson and McGreal's (2000) three essential aspects of evaluation.

1. *What are the acceptable standards in teaching?*
It is clear that we as observers need to be aware of our own prescriptive assumptions (Brookfield 1995). We have found that our expectations and assumptions of 'good practice' are often not the same as the teachers we are observing. There are currently no published standards of practice to refer to in India, although expectations can be gleaned from the NCF (NCERT 2005). In order to ensure that all teachers and management know what is expected, extended time must be given to detailing 'good practice' and explaining the criteria of observation. It is recommended that a set of levelled indicators be derived from the NCF (NCERT 2005), in a manner similar to the UK professional standards for teachers (TDA 2007). There is a great need for contextual and relevant standards to be made available.

2. *Methodology of assessment*
Time is one of the key limiting factors. Schools are also limited by budget and teacher availability for input and training. Structured and planned teacher development does not yet appear to be high on the agenda of many schools and NGOs.

It is essential that a pre-observation meeting occurs with teachers to promote an atmosphere of collaborative learning and change. Teachers need to be far more involved in the whole evaluation process with time made available for their initial and ongoing input.

Post-SDP DE needs to continue the observation–feedback cycle in a specific manner with individual teachers to move them towards more effective teacher development. Effective development involves a collaborative process, and the teachers need to be more aware of and encouraged into taking an active role. Teacher motivation and the simple acknowledgement of the need to develop will play an important part in making this a success. DE can play an active role in enabling teachers to help themselves learn by accessing relevant internet sites.

Presently the triangulated qualitative methods in TE:ST are effective in providing an initial assessment of individual and school needs forming a baseline for future observations. TE:ST observations tend to be very general, so even though we point out a 'focus to improve' in the feedback, this does not become the focus of follow-up observations. TE:ST's current observation style is therefore more suited to school evaluation (accountability) rather than the development of individual teachers. We will ensure in future that once the two initial observations have occurred, future observations will always involve discussion with the teacher, creating focus, followed by focused observation and specific feedback. Results would then show clearly where the improvement focus needs to be.

3. *Evaluators' skills and expertise*
Consistent programmes and time need to be taken to train and acculturate TE:ST observers. An observer can only observe and feedback within their own limitations and expectations.

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Appendix

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION	
TEACHER'S NAME:	DATE:
STANDARD / CLASS:	NUMBER OF CHILDREN:
SUBJECT(S) TAUGHT:	
TIME LESSON STARTED:	DURATION OF OBSERVATION:

	Comments
Evidence of planning:	Is the planning book up to date including evaluations? Does the lesson plan match the lesson being taught? What are the differences? Clear aim of lesson?
Teaching methods:	What styles are being used? Class / group / individual? Organisation? Types of teaching / learning? Change of activities? Suitability?
Behaviour management strategies:	Attention-gaining strategies? Organisation strategies? Discipline strategies? Positive behaviour management?
Teaching aids:	What TAs are being used? How effectively? Enough?
Differentiation:	How catering for struggling students / average / high achievers? Difference in task / outcome? Attitude towards different types of students?
Students' approach to work / task:	Interest of students? Participation of students – who, how many, how often?

Use of time:	Pace of lesson – too slow / too fast? How much content covered in lesson? Explanations too long / brief? Teacher led / child directed? Beginning / ending of lesson? Dead time?
Assessment and evaluation:	How students assessed? Records of assessment? Marking of work? Comments made to students?
Effective strategies: **2 – 4 points T is doing well**	Areas to develop: Max 4 points T needs to improve on. Prioritise.
Feedback Discussed:	o Yes o No
Observer:	**Teacher:**

Defossilising the errors of ESL learners through feedback

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Abstract

This paper proposes ways of defossilising the errors of ESL learners coming from rural backgrounds in Rajasthan through using a variety of classroom strategies. Learners' errors become fossilised at the school level due to lack of feedback or error correction. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part reviews some of the causes of the fossilisation of errors of ESL learners. This is followed by a focus on phonological, syntactic and lexical errors. The concluding part of the paper reviews some strategies that may work in other situations beyond the ones mentioned above and gives some suggestions for 'defossilising' the errors of ESL learners in general.

Introduction

English in Rajasthan, especially in the rural and semi-urban areas, is learnt mainly with the intention of securing a job. It is perhaps because of this limited goal that most students only learn the very basics of the language. Students make errors that go uncorrected by teachers. Over the years these errors get deeply rooted and inadvertently repeated in the speech and writing of ESL learners. This cementing of errors is called 'fossilisation' and the embedding is so firm that it is very difficult for most ESL learners to avoid or evade them.

Feedback on a student's performance can enhance their knowledge, problem management, critical and creative abilities and sense of appreciation for the language and their work. Feedback from teachers to students can be either corrective or non-corrective in nature. The focus of the paper will be more on corrective feedback.

Context

The idea for the paper germinated from my teaching ESL learners (many of whom were first-generation learners) at the tertiary level in three government colleges in eastern and southern Rajasthan (all located in the semi-urban belt). Over the last 15 years of my teaching in these colleges, I have realised that there are some errors which seem to have become fossilised because of repeated use and lack of feedback. It is with this premise in mind that this paper has been planned. At the tertiary level, the concept of feedback is completely missing from language teaching. The main cause of this is that most teachers at no stage of their career are trained in how to give feedback to learners, and even when they do come across the idea of feedback, they rarely learn the strategies for giving feedback

effectively in the classroom. Furthermore, after training there is no monitoring or follow-up of whether the teachers are practically implementing what they have learnt in training sessions.

Causes of fossilisation

One of the root causes of the fossilisation of errors is the lack of feedback. The only feedback given to students from teachers in some contexts is through marks given in tests and exams which rarely improve their linguistic competence. Another challenge in an Indian classroom is heterogeneity. In a diverse class it becomes difficult for the teacher to cater to the needs of all. Even the teaching style and teaching methodology vary from one teacher to the other. The errors of learners reflect their culture, personality and level of comprehensibility. It is only by keeping these factors in mind that the causes of fossilisation can be effectively explored.

The main factors of fossilisation in the context mentioned above are simplification, overgeneralisation, faulty teaching, first language transfers and lack of feedback. Beyond these there are some other secondary factors such as inadequate learning, message misinterpretation, inaccurate facts and inappropriate use.

Areas of fossilisation

The major areas of fossilisation observed during my teaching are pronunciation, lexis and syntax. In terms of lexis, learners tend to pick up incorrect words from various sources of information around like pamphlets, boards, hoardings, banners, newspapers, advertisements on TV, language used in soap operas, on the Internet, especially social networking sites. Most of these errors are because of first language interference. Some such uses in this regard noticed are in phrases and sentences like, 'memorise me to her', and 'fast air'. Then we have misuses like 'too many rush', 'health hazards are arriving', etc.

Most of the syntactical errors of ESL learners are due to mother tongue interference (MTI). Two of the common errors committed by learners in the course of testing and observation are given below:

- We are playing since two hours. (This comes out of *do ghante se …saatbaje se …*)
- If he will come, we will play. (This comes from the Hindi translation, *Agar who ayega to hum khelenge.*)

Feedback in detail

Broadly speaking, feedback comprises correction, assessment, mistakes and errors, conveyed to the learners with the intent of improving them by providing pinpointed and precise information on their performance. It should be incorporated into the learning and teaching process to improve student engagement (Price and O'Donovan 2008). In order to enhance the learning process and overall learning rate, timely and effective feedback should be integrated with assessment. Effective feedback provides reinforcement to the

students, is clear, meaningful, relevant and compatible with the students' prior knowledge.

In the National Student Satisfaction Survey in the UK in 2008, 54% of undergraduate students agreed that the feedback they had received had been prompt and had helped to clarify points they did not understand (Tahir 2008). This percentage may be initially lower in non-native-speaking countries and remote rural and semi-urban schools and colleges, yet it can give a real boost to the overall learning process and acts as a motivator. In the Indian situation where we have large classes, the transformation of information in the form of feedback can be arduous and cumbersome.

Advantages and disadvantages of written feedback

As written feedback is documented, every possible care should be taken to make it clear and comprehensible. It can be argued that it does not leave much scope for misinterpretation if both teachers and students are aware of correction codes. Written feedback is an enduring record which cannot be tampered with. Rather, it can be repeatedly referred to for further correction and improvement.

As written feedback is time-consuming a lot of effort and energy goes to waste if it is not properly utilised. As there may not be immediate feedback for some writing tasks, the context of correction after a passage of time may be lost. So it is imperative that an efficient system for a speedy feedback be developed right from the primary up to the university level. At present written feedback is more expensive but to economise on that we can use technology which might, in some respects, also be more objective.

Advantages and disadvantages of oral feedback

In contrast, oral feedback is less time-consuming and less expensive as it can be given directly on the spot. With less advanced learners, repetition is very important for embedding thoughts and concepts for which the game 'Bingo' has been suggested. In my classes, both language and literature, it has evoked positive responses from my students because it is not at all challenging. In a play-way method corrective feedback is given for various concepts of literature and grammar in a camouflaged manner by the teacher and directly through peers. In a traditional classroom it can be taken up on the board. For example, the board can be divided into 16 boxes and numbered from 1 to 16. Thereafter the class can be divided into two teams, Team A and Team B. A captain for each team is appointed and asked to monitor the responses given. Team A starts by picking a number pair and the teacher writes the answers in the chosen boxes from the master chart that s/he has prepared. After writing the answers in the respective boxes, the teacher tries to elicit responses from the students about the validity of the choice made; this promotes a lot of discussion; the students discuss, correct and decide whether the answer pair in the two boxes match in terms of the topic at hand. If they do, the answer is not rubbed out and the team picking up the right answer gets 10 points. All through the game, the teacher continues to elicit responses from the

learners through metalinguistic cues and clarification requests which assist them in arriving at the correct match.

In order to check the relevance of this game, a pre-test was given to 38 undergraduates who opted for English literature at the tertiary level, to test their understanding of finite and non-finite verbs which they had already studied at senior secondary level. The results were very disappointing, as is evident from the graph below:

Figure 1: Pre-intervention scores
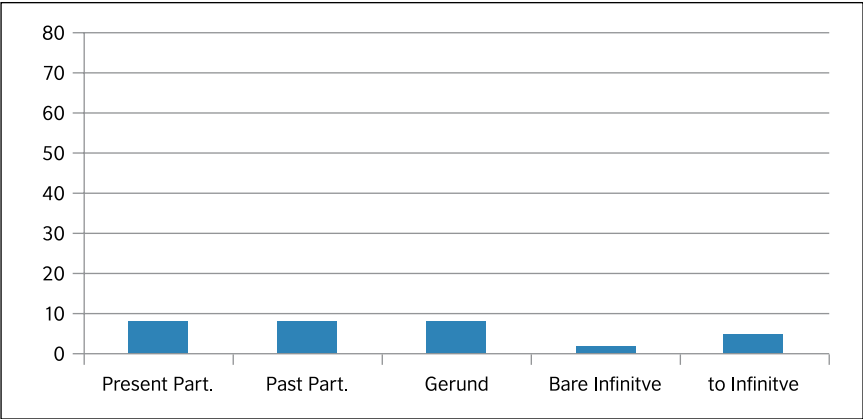
Not even 10% of students were familiar with these terms. They were then taught the topic and then played Bingo. After elicitation, peer feedback and teacher feedback a post-test was taken. The post-test improvement is indicated in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Post-intervention scores
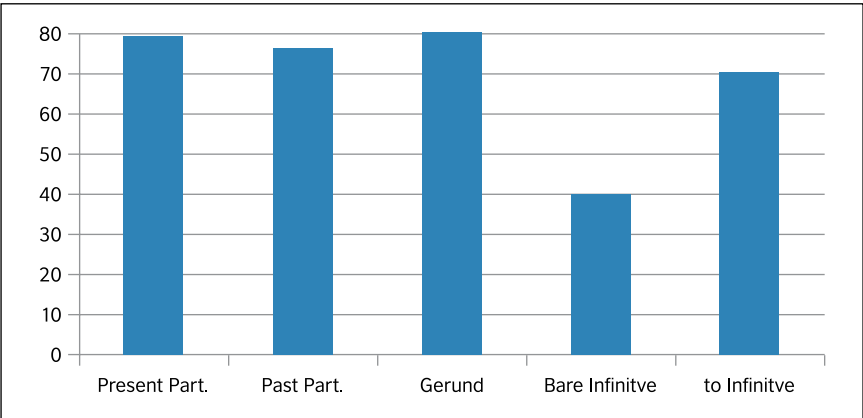
Corrective feedback

Apart from Bingo, corrective feedback which includes explicit correction, recasting, clarification requests, metalinguistic cues, elicitation and repetition can also be taken up (Lyster and Ranta 1997). In explicit correction the teacher indicates that there is an error and provides the correct form, e.g. We cannot say, 'She *have* completed her work,' we say, 'She *has* completed her work'. This is the most common method of feedback that is widely practised by many teachers in India, but it is less preferred these days as it may discourage learners.

A more refined method of feedback these days is recasting in which the teacher does not directly indicate the error, instead reformulates the utterance in the correct form. For example:

> **S:** She have completed her work.

> **T:** She **has** completed her work, hasn't she?

Another way of giving feedback is by making a clarification request in which the teacher uses phrases to indicate that the message was not understood and that a reformulation is required. For example:

> Could you repeat what you said, please?

The teacher can even repeat the student's error by adjusting intonation to draw attention to it.

> They **has** done the work?

A better way that works in my situation is by giving metalinguistic cues which I do mainly while making the students play Bingo. Here the correct form is not provided, instead yes/no questions are posed suggesting that a reformulation is necessary:

> Can we transform intensive verbs?

I have found that direct elicitation of the correct form through questioning also works with low-proficiency ESL learners. A hint like 'How do we say that in English?' can set learners on the right track or at least ensure that they make an effort to recall and reformulate.

Celce-Murcia (1985) advocates eliciting information from the class, conducting meaningful practice of a problematic form, giving focused cues about the error, recasting and encouraging peer or self-correction as effective ways of error correction. For a teacher it is important to diagnose the cause and type of error and avoid over-correction and too much negative feedback, but it is not uniformly the same in all situations. It may be the case in some contexts that some learners are more interested in obtaining negative feedback rather than positive feedback.

So the teacher might want to resort to both negative and positive feedback. Further s/he has to decide as to which one will prove to be more effective and when. In order to provide effective feedback the teacher has to be mindful of the basic objectives of the lesson, regulate the pace of the activity as per the comprehension level of the students, identify problem areas and give clear instructions.

Elicitation is also a vital part of feedback. Elicitation techniques like remaining silent and allowing the learner to think, asking yes/no questions, using encouraging language, gently asking another learner to answer if someone answers incorrectly, using encouraging language and rejecting learners' wrong responses tactfully can help in making even the shyest of learners improve.

Conclusion

In order to defossilise the errors of ESL learners, teachers have to use multiple strategies. Before this they need to understand their students, their background, their shortcomings, the topic(s) to be taught, the expected outcomes, the limitations of the students and the availability of time apart from a host of other secondary factors. No single strategy, game or teaching methodology can work universally in all situations. It may vary from one class to the other and one teaching situation to the other. Feedback, especially oral feedback, which is a neglected part of teaching should be used and, as per the comprehension abilities of ESL learners, used more extensively to infuse confidence in the learners.

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Teaching ESL beginners effectively using corpus linguistics and the lexical approach

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Abstract

This paper outlines the findings and practical applications of a one-year action research project with ESL beginners in a language school in Brighton, UK. The research investigated the effectiveness of teaching corpus-driven content delivered using a lexical teaching approach and found that this interface resulted in faster language acquisition and more successful interaction, allowing learners faster progress to elementary level, and potentially beyond. The study arose out of an identified problem with some beginner learners' poor progress at my school, and resulted in a new 70-hour beginner course being designed and implemented, to provide learners with the necessary foundations to move on to fruitful further study. This research suggests that many of the approaches in producing materials for lower level learners could achieve higher outcomes and the paper outlines the major elements of the research and its findings, detailing how they can be applied in the classroom to better support ESL beginner learners.

Background

The study took place at St Giles College, an English language school in Brighton, in southern England, where adult learners take intensive English courses. I had noticed a significant number of the beginner level learners were making very slow progress, regularly taking over three months to progress to elementary level. They and their teachers were frustrated with this situation, and their being cut off from the English-speaking environment outside the classroom for so long. This frustration was exacerbated by the school's rolling enrolment intake, where more gifted beginners would frequently enter the class and then quickly be promoted to the next level, often on a judgement of comparative (rather than actual) ability. This demotivating factor created self-esteem issues for learners who remained in the class without making tangible progress.

The school is typical in using trusted, international coursebooks as the basis of its courses, and at beginner level these were failing to deliver in the intensive course setting. Analysis of these coursebooks revealed that almost without exception they followed a structural syllabus that devoted the first half to establishing the grammar of the verb BE exemplified with pronouns and lexical sets of nouns and adjectives. In Brighton, this hindered learners' development as life goes on in the city outside the school and, unguided, learners attempt to pick up more functional

language themselves transferring from L1 to fill the gaps, which creates learner errors that quickly become fossilised and hinder accuracy. Such coursebooks may perhaps be better suited to less intensive, semester courses and L1 learning settings, but highlight the dangers of an overly structural syllabus. The needs of learners in Brighton mirror those of English learners across the world today, who are learning English for practical, developmental reasons attached to their work, studies or life opportunities.

Assumptions

Structural syllabus coursebooks seemed to offer beginners a slow and theory-laden introduction to learning English. By contrast, I predicted that collocation would help beginners to develop their language skills more quickly. It would offer learners a practical method for sticking together pieces of language and seeing some of the structure underlying what people say in English, calling for a lexical approach to teaching. Collocation also led me to think that learning and attempting natural pronunciation of collocations would help learners both to learn the individual words as chunks and to enable them to hear them in use when listening to spoken English outside the classroom.

At beginner level, the need to be economical and judicious with content led me to assume that using a corpus, database of real spoken and written English, to identify what vocabulary, grammatical forms and structures to include in lesson content would offer more effective instruction. Corpus linguistics offered a logic to guide me in lesson content, as what were highest frequency lexis and grammar, and most frequent collocations and colligations (the grammatical structures a word commonly appears with) would be more frequently encountered outside the classroom and therefore studying these would increase the learners' opportunities to hear and understand comprehensible input.

Finally, a common theme among collocation, corpus linguistics and traditional structural approaches is syntax, which is central to learning to speak English. If students fail to understand the importance of syntax, it remains a problem even in advanced learners, one which I believe makes progress at higher levels harder to achieve. Syntax also featured heavily in the findings of a backwards analysis of desirable beginner course content, conducted from the perspective of problems found in higher-level learners, identifying gaps in learners' knowledge and L1 transfer strategies which were overlooked at lower levels and influenced lesson design.

The literature

A literature review revealed very little attention has been given to teaching beginners since Chapman (1958) with the exception of a resource book by Grundy (1994). However, much of the work on collocation and corpus linguistics revealed itself to be highly applicable to beginner course construction and addressing the challenges identified above (Willis 1990; Hunston and Francis 2002; Hoey 2005; O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter 2007). Corpus linguistics and the lexical

approach also revealed the relevance of McLaughlin's Attention-Processing Model (Brown 2006: Ch. 10) to the development of language ability, wherein language learning is itself a learnt skill and the brain's limited mental capacity means that as learners we can only focus on combining a few items in a controlled manner at one time. The idea that structured practice of these combinations gradually leads to automaticity in these patterns, with our peripheral attention being given to items already mastered or the broader situation or context, fitted well with the assumptions that learners would benefit from focusing on creating chunks of frequent language.

Practical approach

The logic of corpus linguistics gives teachers guidance in what to teach, and the lexical approach a way to exploit this content, using the corpus tools of frequency lists and online concordancers to establish the natural collocation patterns of high-frequency lexis. To test this assumption, I constructed and analysed frequency reference tables out of British National Corpus (BNC) frequency lists (Leech, Rayson and Wilson 2001).

Figure 1: Frequency reference table

the Det 61847	1 6187267 the det	time 1833	be 42277	of 29391	so 1893	it 10875	other 1336
of Prep 29391	2 4239632 be v	year 1639	have 13655	in 18214	up 1795	i 8875	good 1276
and Conj 26817	3 3093444 of preps	people 1256	do 5594	to 9343	then 1595	you 6954	new 1154
a Det 21626	4 2687863 and conj	way 1108	will 3357	for 8412	out 1542	he 6810	old 648
in Prep 18214	5 2186369 a det	man 1003	say 3344	with 6575	now 1382	they 4332	great 635
to inf 16284	6 1924315 in prep	day 940	would 2904	on 6475	only 1298	she 3801	high 574
it Pron 10875	7 1620860 to inf-marker	thing 776	can 2672	by 5096	just 1277	we 3578	small 518
is Verb 9982	8 1375636 have v	child 710	get 2210	at 4790	more 1275	who 2055	different 484
to Prep 9343	9 1090186 it pron	Mr 673	make 2165	from 4134	also 1248	them 1733	large 471
was Verb 9236	10 1039323 to prep	government 670	go 2078	as 1774	very 1165	him 1649	local 445
Ungrouped	**Grouped**	**Nouns**	**Verbs**	**Preps**	**Adverbs**	**Prons**	**Adjs**
I Pron 8875	11 887877 for prep	work 653	see 1920	into 1634	well 1119	me 1364	social 422
for Prep 8412	12 884599 I pron	life 645	know 1882	about 1524	how 1016	her 1085	important 392
that Conj 7308	13 760399 that conj	woman 631	take 1797	like 1064	down 845	one 953	long 392
you Pron 6954	14 695498 you pron	system 619	could 1683	after 927	back 793	us 623	young 379
he Pron 6810	15 681255 he pron	case 613	think 1520	between 903	on 756	something 526	national 376
be* Verb 6644	16 680739 on prep	part 612	come 1512	through 743	there 746	nothing 341	british 357
with Prep 6575	17 675027 with prep	group 607	give 1284	over 735	still 718	himself 311	right 354
on Prep 6475	18 559596 do v	number 606	look 1151	against 562	even 716	anything 288	early 353
by Prep 5096	19 534162 at prep	world 600	may 1135	under 553	too 701	itself 237	possible 342
at Prep 4790	20 517171 by prep	house 598	should 1112	out_of 491	here 699	themselves 237	big 338
have* Verb 4736	21 465486 not adv	area 585	use 1071	without 456	where 628	someone 187	little 306
are Verb 4707	22 461945 this det	company 579	find 990	within 449	however 605	everything 187	political 306
not Neg 4626	23 459622 but conj	problem 565	want 945	during 440	over 584	herself 172	able 304
this DetP 4623	24 434532 from prep	service 549	tell 775	before 434	in 573	anyone 150	late 302
s Gen 4599	25 433441 they pron	place 534	must 723	such_as 321	as 567	everyone 133	general 301
but Conj 4577	26 426896 his det	hand 532	put 700	towards 286	most 565	whom 129	full 289

I then used these to help me identify the most common collocations and colligations of the highest frequency words using online concordance software (Brigham Young University 2012). NB: although this concordance only uses the

BNC to 1993, its validity for high-frequency words is still high. However, open access to more up-to-date corpora for teacher research is a matter of necessity if this area of research is to flourish.

Concordances brought to the surface surprising data about the high frequency of common collocations which even high-level learners are seldom able to understand or produce. Teaching these collocations might develop more learner awareness and natural use of language and reduce the instinct to rely on L1 transfer, in lessons that highlight similarity and difference between languages. Just one example is the use of the word *way*, which is among the ten most frequent nouns in the BNC and strongly collocates with many of the ten most frequent adjectives (and many of the 30 highest-frequency BNC words), see Figure 2 (Brigham Young University 2012), but in my experience is seldom used with such frequency even by advanced learners.

Figure 2: Online concordancer showing high-frequency adjective collocates of *way* in the BNC (reproduced here with the kind permission of Brigham Young University)

Therefore, based on these clear corpus findings rather than my intuition, I developed lesson aims, content and materials. Lessons focused on discrete lexis which fell within the 500 most frequent words in most cases, and often the most frequent fifty words in any word class. Any exceptions to this, for example using memorable vocabulary from pictures, were always presented in collocation with a high-frequency collocate, extending the range of the frequent item's collocation for learners, while allowing some flexibility within the research parameters.

Using only the highest-frequency words excluded some stock content of beginner courses such as nationalities, which allowed time to be used on content with higher frequency and more transferrable use. Teaching high-frequency words highlighted and differentiated parts of speech for learners through chunking activities, raising awareness of word class and syntax through collocation. Lessons often involved use of collocation memory maps which supported learners'

recording and review of lexis in collocation rather than serial lists of words, and speaking activities exploited these to enable accuracy and fluency in practice tasks.

Course design typically takes either an analytic or synthetic approach. Analytic, bottom-up approaches to understanding and production primarily teach grammatical rules and focus on individual words, while synthetic, top-down approaches develop language aptitude through focusing on collocations and chunks of language as whole units, and the meaning and function of the words together in combination.

This course blended both approaches, presenting vocabulary in meaningful collocation, e.g. *go to the gym, a big breakfast,* and chunking up grammatical structures into functional pieces, e.g. *Do you…, didn't go*, reinforcing this with natural connected speech, while also training learners to construct lexical collocations using individual high-frequency words, and to put different chunks together into structures, together highlighting the fundamental patterns of English syntax. The approach helped students collocate and combine chunks in their own production, and provided a controlled space for learners to experiment and develop a personalised understanding. This allowed students to achieve early fluency and accuracy in production and nurtured learners' own independent study skills and language learning skills.

First lessons

The initial lesson introduced the 30 most frequent words from the BNC (Leech et al. 2001) ten at a time, and asked learners to play with them to make collocations and add content words to them to make sentences, bringing together some of the words learners may already know and highlighting the importance of syntax in English. Although this lesson had little communicative purpose, it drew learners' attention to noticing syntax as a feature of English more broadly, and at the end of the lessons learners felt that they had some welcome certainty on the use of these words and their syntax in sentences, which learners could construct. Two further lessons reviewed these collocations and this approach notably freed learners from overthinking these words in later lessons and enabled peer-teaching to take place within the lessons themselves, where one learner had a better command of basic syntax or knowledge of these words than their partner or classmates.

Focusing on and combining collocations

Many lessons focused on introducing lexical items, first introducing the oral form with the written word, and then clarifying meaning, before introducing some collocates and building this content into collocations using collocation memory maps, finally, combining these collocations with a grammatical collocation to establish, practise and automise these patterns in receptive and productive tasks.

In the example below, learners practise some international nouns, see Figure 6 adapted from Bygrave (2012), match these to six high-frequency verb collocates

Figure 3: Top 30 English words – classroom activities

Data from Lancaster University: *Companion website for "word frequencies in written and spoken English based on the British National Corpus". (2001)*

Figure 4: Top 30 English words – classroom activities
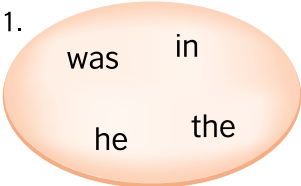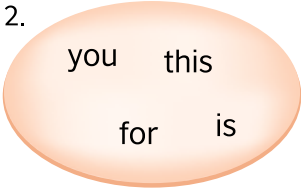
Figure 5: Top 30 English words – classroom activities
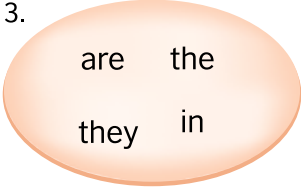
Write the words in the boxes. Only one way is correct

1.

was   in   he   the

1	2	3	4

2.

you   this   for   is

1	2	3	4

3.

are   the   they   in

1	2	3	4

4.

his   she   is

1	2	3

5.

had   that   in   I
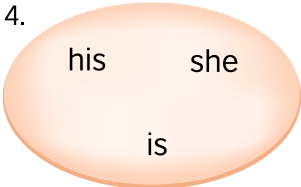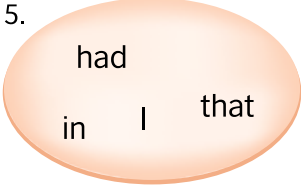
1	2	3	4

Figure 6: International nouns

1. Listen to the words and say them.

bank	bus	café	car	chocolate
cinema	coffee	computer	doctor	film
football	golf	guitar	hotel	passport
piano	pizza	police	restaurant	salad
spaghetti	stadium	student	taxi	tea
telephone	television	tennis	the internet	university

2. Put the words into groups.

places	sport	food and drink	other

Acknowledgement: New Total English Starter Student's Book, Jonathan Bygrave, Pearson Education Limited, © Pearson Education Limited 2012

Figure 7: Scaffolding high achievement

/j-uh/   **VERBS and NOUNS collocations 2**   /d-i-j-uh/   /j-uh/ ....?
Do you...?   Did you...?   (= every day)

the bank a café   the bus a coffee   spaghetti a coffee   yes, I do.
the police **go to**   a pizza a car   No, I don't.
get a taxi   **have**
the cinema   a pizza

a computer the Internet   a film the piano golf football   /j-i-juh/ ....?
use   **see** the doctor **play**   ...yesterday?

yes, I do.
No, I don't.

on collocation memory maps and then review the present simple question form and short answers taught the previous day, before having the past simple question form and short answer introduced and practising these in speaking activities.

Co-text

Collocations and chunks also associate with particular contexts and co-texts, the words or sentences surrounding the language being used. Adjacency pairs are one meaningful way of helping learners to build their understanding of and ability to use language, developing the skill of predicting content in situations, as with the short answer responses above. This was extended in other lessons to develop listening skills of prediction before listening to texts and associate certain chunks with predicted lexical and grammatical content e.g. asking about the weekend.

Syntax development

In this example the ten highest frequency nouns from the BNC (Leech et al. 2001) are introduced on individual paper squares, followed by the ten most frequent adjectives. Pronunciation and meaning are checked, learners make adjective and noun collocations and map these onto collocation memory maps in group feedback. Learners then play a Pelmanism game with the word cards to review common adjective and noun collocations.

Figure 8: Ten most frequent nouns and adjectives

time	year	other	good
people	way	new	old
man	day	great	high
thing	child	small	different
government	work	large	local

Repurposing communicative materials

A further benefit of using this approach is that it can provide a new purpose to well-designed, picture-based practice materials we already have at hand. They contain a wealth of useful, high-frequency, distinct yet contextualised vocabulary in which learners can explore and chunk together nouns, verbs and prepositions, explore tense use and reinforce accurate syntax use, e.g. Figure 10 (Hadfield

1984). Identifying the elements for students and asking them to find and connect these in controlled stages allows learners to achieve a lot and engage with the resource using a simple worksheet emphasising syntax and collocation. Although it may look messy, learners are really engaged and working out syntax, collocation, and producing some technically challenging constructions, made achievable through controlled lexical chunking.
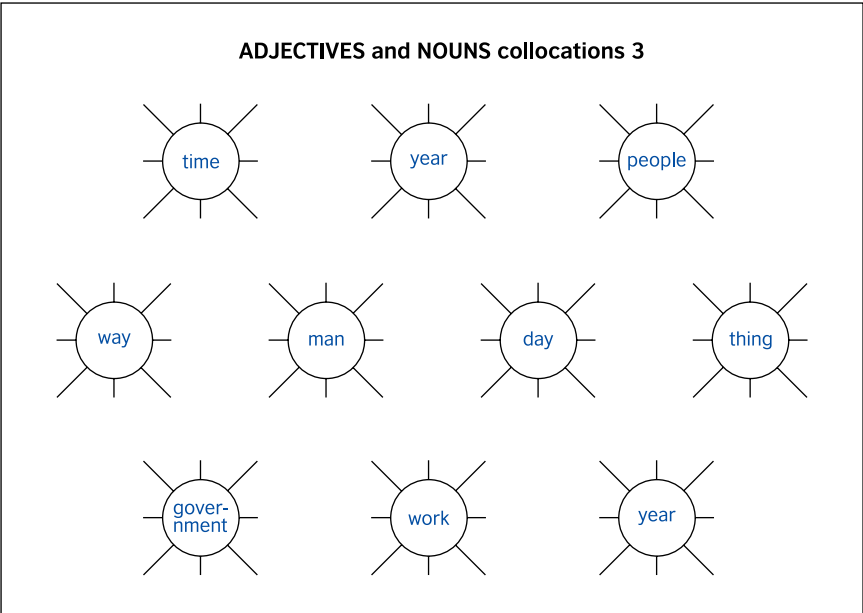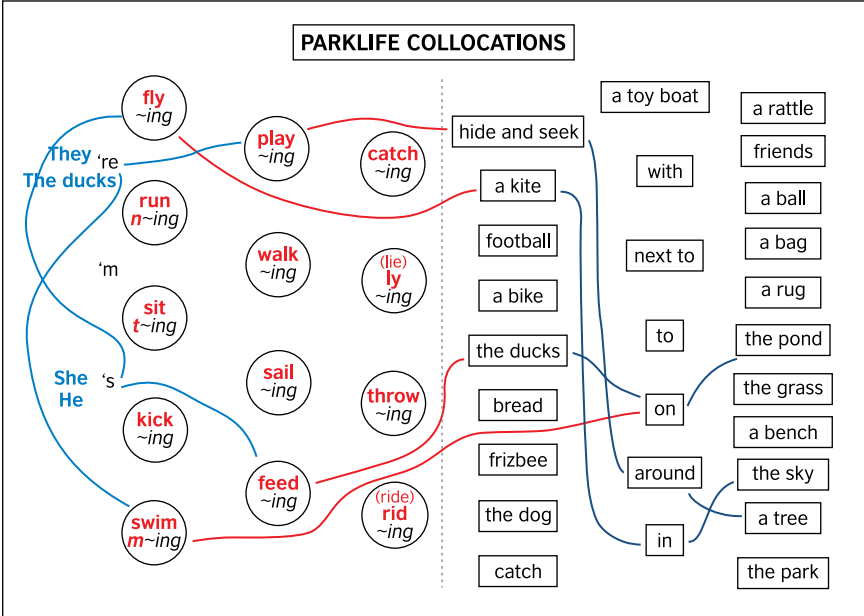
Figure 9: Adjectives and nouns collocations 3

Figure 10: A rich communicative activity image

Acknowledgement: Elementary Communication Games, Jill Hadfield, Pearson Education Limited, (c) Jill Hadfield 1984

Figure 11: A lexical worksheet for use with a picture of a park

Pronunciation

Teaching chunks brings pronunciation features to prominence, so discrete vocabulary and lexical and grammatical collocations were modelled and drilled using a natural pronunciation learners could expect to hear on the street or on TV and the radio. This pronunciation was practised to help match word and collocation sound-shapes with learners' lexical and grammatical knowledge. To simplify teaching of sounds, I used synthetic phonics (which uses letters of the alphabet separated by hyphens to represent sounds) rather than requiring students to learn the phonemic symbols. Its benefit in highlighting sound-spelling correlations and differences allowed me to develop learners' understanding of the most common features of English phonology both in an integrated way and by reviewing high-frequency lexis from earlier lessons.

Findings

Successful lessons focused on high-frequency lexical and grammatical words in combination, introducing individual chunks from grammatical structures with high-frequency lexis to achieve functional speaking aims. When content words were combined in collocation, it enabled students to focus on both the meaning of these words and their place in grammatical and lexical patterns together. Further activities joining lexical collocations with grammatical chunks enabled learners to become communicative speakers with unusual fluency, and to build connections between different pieces of the English language jigsaw that discrete grammar teaching fails to allow.

Figure 12: Presenting sounds with synthetic phonics when drilling

/w-air d-i-j-uh g-oh/

/h-ue d-i-j-uh g-oh w-i-th/

/w-e-n d-i-j-uh- g-oh

/w-o w-uh-z-th-uh w-e-th-uh l-igh-k/

/w-o d-i-j-uh d-ue th-air/

/w-o w-uh-z-i-t l-igh-k/

/w-air d-i-j-uh s-t-ey/

1. Where did you go?
2. Who did you go with?
3. When did you go?
4. What was the weather like?
5. what did you do there?
6. What was it like?
7. Where did you stay?

Figure 13: Focusing on sound features reviewing previous lesson content

Sounds and spelling 1 /s-aw-n-z-uh-n s-p-e-l-i-ng/

this /s/

bank /a/

tea /t/

guitar /i/

at /uh/

Top 30 English words

have you this
in
and the of
are a
not from it 's
to on
had was they
but she
his is at
be by
I for
with that he

bank	bus	café	car	chocolate
cinema	coffee	computer	doctor	film
football	golf	guitar	hotel	passport
piano	pizza	police	restaurant	salad
spaghetti	stadium	student	taxi	tea
telephone	television	tennis	the Internet	university

Where discrete high-frequency function words, e.g. prepositions, tenses or quantifiers, were the focus of a lesson with content words incidental to the lesson focus, learners generally assumed they had understood input activities but went on to demonstrate considerable misunderstanding and mis-collocation in production activities, when compared to items introduced incidentally, in combination with lexical collocation, strongly indicating that structural courses relying on notional syllabuses do little to support ESL beginner learning.

The range of language features to be noticed in each lesson held the interest of both the strongest and the weakest learners in classes, with the result that

learners did not feel bored by the content or push to change level, meaning weaker learners felt less frustrated by their pace of progress and were supported by stronger peers.

Results for learners

Learners made significant progress compared to those who had studied traditional coursebook-based lessons, with all students changing to elementary level after four weeks and managing well in those classes. Despite small data samples (25 students on the traditional, coursebook courses and 11 on the research courses) the results for longer-stay students are also interesting. The median average time between changing level (counting beginner and elementary as one level) fell by four weeks from 12 weeks to 7.81 weeks, indicating possible advantages beyond the level itself.

Figure 14: Comparing long-stay beginner students' progress
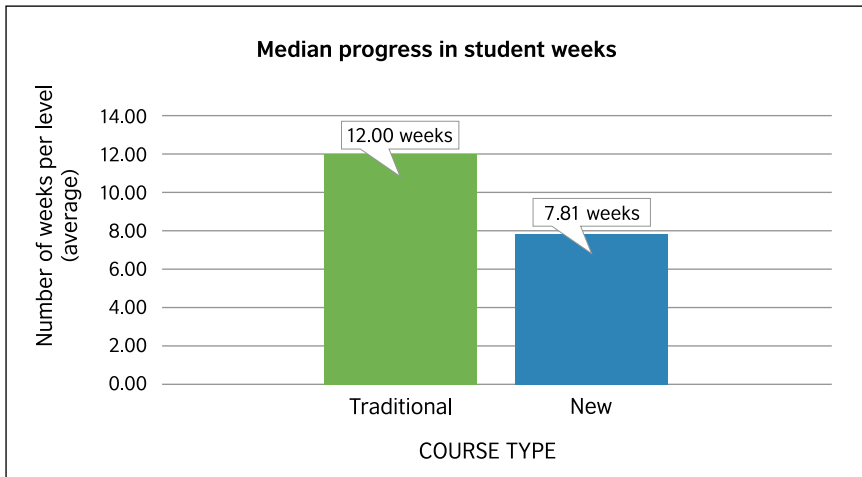
The qualitative feedback from elementary level teachers is that students coming up from beginner classes fitted capably into their classes, and were not the lowest either in production or understanding. They reported that these students had stronger language awareness and a pro-active attitude to learning, being on task and actively questioning them about activities. They also said learners produced more natural language and collocation than other learners and routinely checked the accuracy of collocations with the teacher.

Conclusions

The interface of corpus linguistics and the lexical approach connects up pieces of the English language puzzle, giving learners an outline of the overall picture of the language, which typical structural coursebooks leave as unconnected islands of content. It also chunks up confusing grammatical notions into manageable parts, enabling learners to construct quite complex and accurate language to express themselves using the limited range of language that is available to them.

This approach to language learning at beginner level motivates learners and provides essential content for understanding English in a range of situations. It prepares learners well for the next level of English language study and seems to have an impact on progress at higher levels, possibly through highlighting collocation, language awareness and language learning skills which are transferable to other levels and learning contexts.

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Teaching science through co-operative learning strategies

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Abstract

The present study was carried out to implement the principles of co-operative learning structures in curriculum transaction of Science in grade VIII students and to study its effect on achievement in Science as well as any changes in communication and interpersonal skills. The sample of the study was 120 students of grade VIII. The experimental group was taught using a mixture of co-operative learning (CL) strategies as per the requirement of the content, while a control group was taught using traditional teaching methods. The results indicated that students who studied by the CL method had a higher level of achievement than students in the control group. The present research indicates that changing from a traditional competitive classroom to a co-operative one does not diminish student achievement; it significantly improves achievement. In the present research, students were individually accountable for their academic performance and the group was also responsible for every group member's performance. Thus a positive effect on students' achievement in Science was found to suggest the usefulness of co-operative learning for improving students' achievement.

Rationale of the study

Scientists and engineers work mostly in groups and less often as isolated investigators. Similarly, students should gain experiences sharing responsibility for learning with each other. Research indicates that a vast majority of students view school as a competitive enterprise where one tries to do better than other students. This competitive expectation is already widespread when students enter school and grows stronger as they progress through school. Co-operation among students, who celebrate each other's successes, encourage each other to do homework, and learn to work together regardless of ethnic backgrounds or whether they are male or female, bright or struggling, disabled or not, is still rare.

Schools generally focus on teaching and content and life skills separately. There is a need to integrate content teaching and life skills teaching, keeping in mind the effectiveness and usability of learning in one's immediate life. It is also mentioned in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) that, "Children's voices and experiences do not find expression in the classroom; often the only voice heard is that of the teacher." All these situations indicate the need for reshaping and recreating our present classroom environments and methodologies as per the basic societal needs and the educational aims suggested by the NCF.

One approach for providing collaborative opportunities for students of science is *co-operative learning.* Co-operative learning (CL) is defined as students working

together to "attain group goals that cannot be obtained by working alone or competitively" (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec 1993). It is a process which requires knowledge to be discovered by students and transformed into concepts to which the students can relate. Learning takes place through dialogue among students in a social setting. The present study was carried out to implement the principles of co-operative learning structures in curriculum transaction of Science in grade VIII students and to study its effect on achievement in Science as well as change in communication and interpersonal skills.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the effectiveness of co-operative learning methods compared to traditional methods of teaching in relation to achievement in Science of standard VIII students.

2. To study the effectiveness of co-operative learning methods compared to traditional methods of teaching on achievement in Science of standard VIII students in relation to:

- gender
- type of family
- having sibling(s) or not
- interpersonal skills measured by Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI)
- communication skills.

3. To study the effectiveness of co-operative learning methods compared to traditional methods of teaching in relation to changes in the communication skills of standard VIII students.

4. To study the effectiveness of co-operative learning methods compared to traditional methods of teaching in changes in the communication skills of standard VIII students in relation to:

- gender
- type of family
- having sibling(s) or not
- interpersonal skills measured by Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI).

Methodology

The sample of the study comprised 120 pupils studying in VIII Class. They were divided into two groups, a control group and an experimental group, comprising 60 students in each of them. The methodology used included:

- purposive sampling for selection of the school
- stratified random sampling for selecting the class for the control and experimental group
- all students of a class selected as part of the experimental or control group were included in the study.

It is necessary to control all those variables that may significantly affect the dependent variables. Hence, such intervening variables were controlled by employing suitable controls.

Nature of school
The sample was selected from a school (St. Kabir School, Ahmedabad) of GSEB. Both branches of the school employed the same scholastic and co-scholastic curriculum and activities.

Grade level
Class VIII students were selected for the study and grade level was thus kept constant during the study.

Teacher
The experimental group sections were taught by teachers with a sound knowledge of co-operative learning and the control group was taught by the teachers who teach traditionally as planned in the annual curriculum of the school. Teachers teaching the control group did not interact with the teachers teaching through CL methods during the entire time period of intervention ensuring the non-influence on each other.

Subject
The experimental group and the control group were taught the same units of Science of std VIII text book of GSEB.

Duration employed
Both control group and experimental groups were taught the topics for the same time period.

Co-operative learning structures used

You will find listed below the common Co-operative Learning strategies which the researcher has found useful in the Indian classroom with around 45 students per class: Fish bowl, Learning Partners, Think-Pair-Share, Think-Pair-Square, Three-Step-Interview, Checkmates, Roundtable, Numbered Heads Together, Pairs-Check, Jigsaw-II.

Intervention

The experiment was conducted in the following phases:

- Phase 1: Administration of pre-test to both experimental and control groups
- Phase 2: Formation of Co-operative learning teams in the experimental group
- Phase 3: Orientation of students of the experimental group
- Phase 4: Conducting the Instructional programme
    - Implementation of five lesson plans for five weeks
    - Lesson plans were planned taking into account the social and academic goals.
- Phase 5: Administration of the post-test

Data collection tools

Completed by participants

1. A close-ended questionnaire sheet to collect data about their gender, type of family, whether they have siblings or not.
2. A pre- and post-test paper for measuring achievement in Science.
3. A team project evaluation sheet.

Instruments administered by the researcher

1. Communication skill tool. The Communication Skills Test designed by Robin Jacobs, Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon.
2. Interpersonal Reactivity index. Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI).

Findings and discussion

The post-test achievement mean scores of the experimental group and the control group, matching on their pre-knowledge of the topic covered during the intervention, differ significantly in favour of the experimental group who were taught using CL methods.

Table 1: Table with Sample size (N), Mean, Standard deviation, Degree of freedom (df) and t value of achievement in Science of Std. VIII students taught by co-operative learning methods and traditional methods of teaching.

Mean score of achievement test in science							
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	Calculated *t* value	Signifi-cance
Achievement Score in Science	Experi-mental	60	31.29	5.01	118	15.84	Significant at 0.01 level
	Control	60	18.75	3.53			

(Also both the male and female students, students living in joint and nuclear families, having siblings or being a single child, having high or low IRI of Std. VIII, benefited significantly in achievement in Science when taught using co-operative learning structures.)

Students in the experimental group taught through CL showed significant development of their communication skills

Table 2: Table with Sample size (N), Mean, Standard deviation, Degree of freedom (df) and t value of communication of students taught by co-operative learning methods and traditional methods of teachings

Mean difference in communication skill scores						
Group	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**df**	**t**	**Significance**
Experimental	60	4.10	3.04	118	6.98	Significant at 0.01 level
Control	60	1.25	0.89			

(Also both male and female students, students living in joint and nuclear families, having high or low IRI of Std. VIII, benefited significantly in achievement in Science when taught using CL.)

There was no significant difference in the development of communication skills of students having no siblings in the experimental and control groups. However, it was significant in the case of students with siblings. There was a big difference in the sample size of students having siblings and those not having siblings. From a total sample size of 120 students, the number of students having no sibling, in both experiment and control groups put together, is 17 in comparison to 103 students who do have siblings. This could be one of the reasons for t value being significant with respect to students having no siblings. However this needs further investigation by equalizing both the groups based on having siblings or not.

There was no significant difference in the mean scores of communication skills of Std. VIII students taught by CLS and traditional methods of teaching in relation to interpersonal skills.

Conclusion of the present study

This study indicates that co-operative learning can enhance students' readiness to work with their peers. It reduces communication apprehension and increases the development of empathy and the competencies to resolve issues amicably.

Group work can fail if we do not take into account the social interactions among pupils and the competencies developed within the classroom context. Implicit learning by observing others working and sometimes observing ourselves acts as a valid resource for developing a new perspective for both teacher and taught. A better understanding of their classroom culture leads to developing successful and boundary-less co-operative learning structures across curriculum and grades.

As the term suggests, the transmission orientation views teaching as the transmission of prescribed bodies of knowledge. A transaction orientation is via dialogue between teacher and pupils and is open to students contributing their own knowledge to the learning process. The transformation orientation gives students control over their learning and enhances their self-motivation and self-direction, with the teacher acting as a co-learner.

The results of this study indicate that the post-test achievement mean scores of the experimental group and control group, matching on their pre-knowledge of the topic covered during the intervention, differ significantly in favour of the experimental group who were taught using co-operative learning methods. Both the male and female students of Std VIII living in joint and nuclear families, having siblings or no siblings benefited significantly in achievement in Science as well as the development of communication skills when taught using co-operative learning structures. CL provides an environment for both male and female learners wherein they understand other persons or situations, and enables them to resolve differences, build trust and respect, and create an environment where creative ideas, problem solving, affection and caring can flourish.

Educational implications

It is suggested that co-operative learning has proven to be practical and widely acceptable to students.

- When students are not able to understand the teacher's explanation, group members are able to explain in simpler words that are more easily understood. In this way, it improves students' perception about learning and decreases their feeling of alienation.
- Co-operative learning can be used as a supplement to large group classroom teaching. It is easier to monitor 12 or 13 students in groups than 55 or 60 individuals in a class.
- Co-operative learning suggests a new role for the teacher. A teacher, accustomed to being the sole source of information for teaching the passive learners in the classroom, has to change to become a facilitator in the learning process to actively encourage the students to:
  - help each other and learn from each other
  - participate in discussions
  - facilitate each other's learning
  - engage in problem solving in a democratic way.
- The teacher should closely monitor the involvement of all kinds of students, especially the achieving students, to make sure everyone shares and benefits from group learning. Teachers need to structure the lessons and curriculum co-operatively.
- Group tasks should be designed and communicated to students in ways that make them believe that they are linked in such a way that one cannot succeed unless everyone succeeds. The tasks should engage students more actively in their learning experiences.
- Meaningful content in co-operative lessons is critical for the success of all students. The topics in different subjects to be taught by co-operative learning should be so decided that they develop the skills in students that infuse self-confidence in the direction of becoming independent learners.

- Important skills such as critical thinking, creative problem solving and the synthesis of knowledge can easily be accomplished through co-operative group activities in the inclusive classroom. So co-operative learning is recommended for fostering students' reasoning, communication, empathy, and stress reduction.
- For students to succeed within their groups, careful consideration regarding group heterogeneity must be considered in conjunction with roles that ensure active and equal participation. Various roles can be given to students making them responsible and valuing their contribution in group work.

The method of co-operative learning is much more crucial to the inculcation of values of co-operative living and healthy co-operation rather than competition that narrows down the process of education to self-directed individualized learning. Both healthy co-operation as well as healthy competition complement and supplement each other. As educators it is important for us to create the right environment, organize ideas, be clear and stay on topic in order to develop content knowledge and life skills among pupils under our care.

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Theme three

Technology resources for language education

The Pedagogy of Collaboration: teaching effectively within an evolving technology landscape

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Abstract

As technologies evolve, our communication styles, information needs and learning patterns are changing as well. How we as professionals can harness these opportunities that technology provides yet maintain our grounding in solid pedagogical approaches can be challenging. Yet, this is an exciting time, allowing us to utilize our own creativity as we innovate our teaching in response to our changing environments. This paper outlines a framework that guides educators in using technologies in pedagogically sound ways that meet students' communicative competence and digital literacy needs within an increasingly connected world. Resources and guidelines for integrating them into the classroom effectively are discussed, as teachers use technology for collaboration in an ever-changing technological landscape.

Background

The current educational and technological landscape in India and many global contexts is one that increasingly demands English employability skills for collaboration and authentic communication such as job interviews and international projects. This need arises at least in part from rising demands for highly skilled professionals who are proficient in technical and professional English across all skills. Coupled with increased internet connectivity, there is a growing awareness of the need for students to become more digitally literate. These current realities are leading to calls for increased creativity and innovation, as well as new roles for learners and educators. Teachers can move from being one-way transmitters of information into educational facilitators and guides, and students can now become more self-directed and active in their own learning processes.

Pedagogies to meet the demands of these new roles include group learning tasks and tasks that allow students to become collaborators and cooperators in the classroom, not competitors (Lakshmi, as cited in Gunesekera 2013: 140). The opportunities for current interactive technologies are to allow teachers and students to become content producers, not just consumers, as technology is integrated into curricula (NCERT 2005).

The current educational landscape is thus one that needs to permit self-expression and questioning; be motivating and challenging; build students' self-confidence; allow for independent thinking; encourage learners to seek information; and allow for teacher flexibility (NCERT ibid.). These realities lead to the need for a new educational framework.

The Pedagogy of Collaboration within an Evolving Technology Landscape

While technology provides many opportunities, it also can lead to tension and uncertainties in the classroom. The Pedagogy of Collaboration within an Evolving Technology Landscape is one framework that can provide the guidance educators and students need to maximize learning potential. Collaboration here refers to students working in groups on a project or task that has a common goal. Whereas with teamwork students may compile their individually completed work for a final product, with collaborative work students share their work and co-participate through all phases of project/task development, building on the new student and teacher roles (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Opportunity for a Pedagogy of Collaboration within an Evolving Technology Landscape
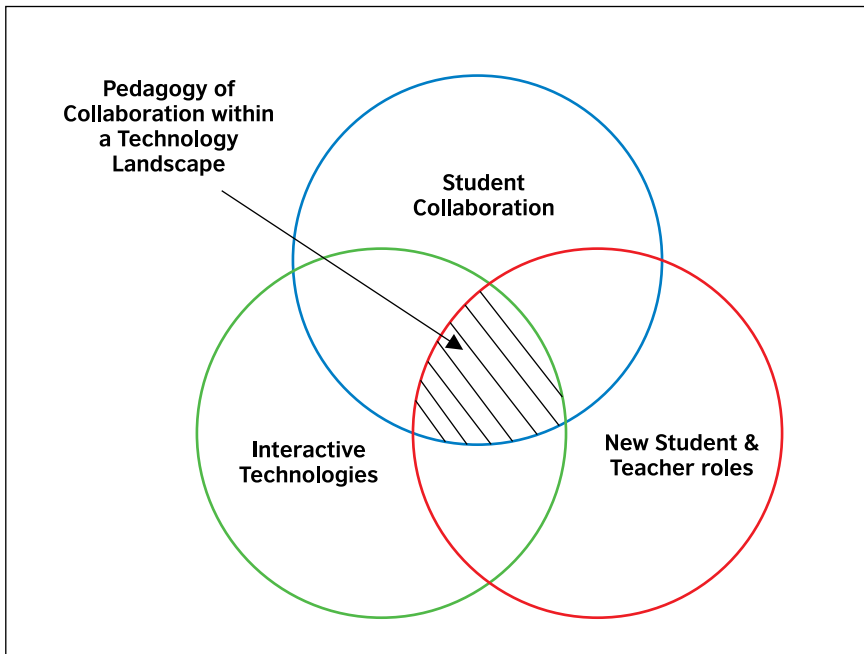
Figure 1 highlights that the greatest potential to meet current educational opportunities is found in the intersection between student collaboration, new student and teacher roles, and interactive technologies. The framework consists of ten guiding principles, which will be outlined below.

Guideline 1: Allow your teaching to evolve as technology evolves

The 'collaborative autonomous language learner' (Kessler and Bikowski 2010: 53) should be in the centre of any learning experience (see Figure 2). These learners are autonomous in that they are self-directed, goal-oriented and monitor their learning. They:

1. are able to 'use language to independently contribute personal meanings as a collaborative member of a group'

2. are able to 'use appropriate strategies for communicating as a collaborative member of a group'

3. have the 'willingness to demonstrate these abilities within the group' (Kessler and Bikowski ibid: 53).

There can be tension between the individual learner's goals, however, and the goals of the collaborative group, where members also have their own priorities. Therefore, the collaborative autonomous language learner needs to successfully negotiate this space. As Figure 2 illustrates, also affecting the learner are evolving collaborative tools, evolving collaborative use of those tools and evolving pedagogical practices.

Figure 2: A framework for the co-evolution of collaborative autonomous pedagogy (Kessler, Bikowski and Boggs 2012: 105)
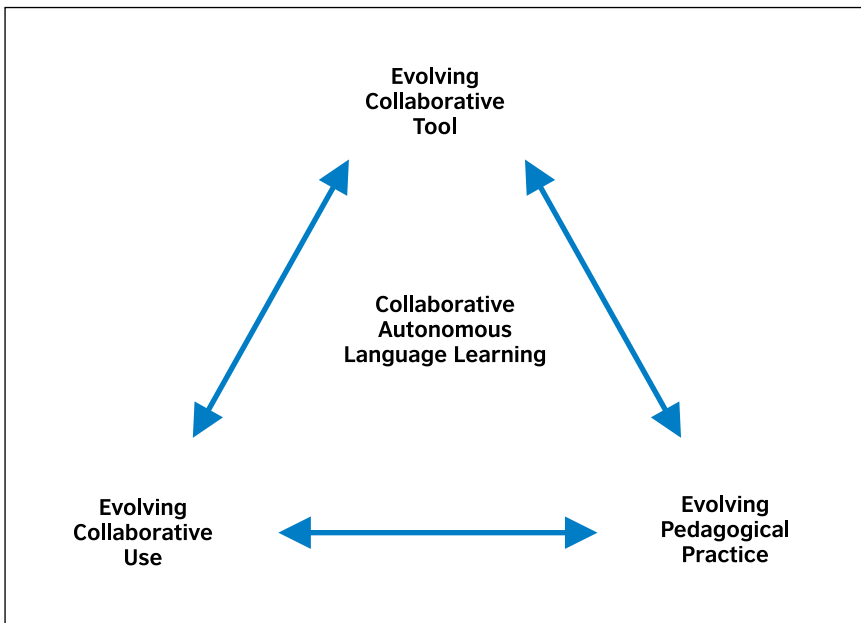
Teachers can allow their teaching to evolve as technology evolves by engaging in activities such as collaborative writing tasks. Web-based word processing tools (such as docs.google.com, *plus.google.com/hangouts,* or piratepad.net) can be utilized, as they offer synchronous or asynchronous writing/editing, chatting, comment features, and revision history features for referring to or reverting to past versions of the document. Students can be placed into groups based on teacher selection, given two or three topics to choose from for their writing, and move through the stages of writing together. Having students work on in-class writing three or four times during a term allows students to develop their collaborative as well as personal writing skills.

Guideline 2: Have students collaborate in a variety of ways using different technologies

Efficient learners are able to choose an effective technology tool from many options that meet the needs of the learning task. Making these choices effectively requires practice using a variety of types of technologies and for different types of collaborative projects. In contexts with a wide penetration of mobile devices, apps provide an opportunity for learners and teachers to explore collaboration creatively. Many browser-based online tools (such as padlet.com or diigo.com) can be accessed on any type of device, and often have a corresponding downloadable app. In lower-technology contexts, apps allowing feature phones to be used as smartphones (e.g., American English's use of binu, m.binu.com/ae/) can provide a vehicle for student collaboration that would not be otherwise available.

Students can be tasked with generating their own content, for example, with a reflexive photography project. They can, for example, create a multimedia collage (e.g. with presentation or video production software), with media representing their language learning goals, barriers to meeting those goals, and strategies to overcoming those barriers. Collaborating in small groups, students encourage each other and offer recommendations on further ways to meet their goals. In addition to offering students increased opportunities for practical tips and communication, projects using student-generated content support learners as they build a greater sense of ownership over their own learning and help educators more fully understand learners' realities (Schulze 2007).

Guideline 3: Harness the powers of technologies that encourage communication and increase learner motivation and reflection

Technologies that allow students to create their own identity and express themselves not only with words but also with rich media content such as images, music, artwork, or even varying colour schemes/templates can be very motivating. Collaborative projects that encourage students to add their personal voice to the group voice offer students the opportunity to reflect upon and communicate their opinions. Blogging tools (e.g., blogger.com) or online graphic novel tools (e.g., comiclife.com) are user-friendly and can be easily monitored by the teacher, while they also offer many options for users, including using images/movies or linking to other pertinent sites. Reflection can be encouraged by using an online journaling tool (e.g., penzu.com), where learners can write about and add images about their development in English as well as their ability to be effective collaborators. These journals can be shared with the teacher or with group members, or students can reflect and write in them independently.

Digital storytelling is one type of student-generated content that can be quite motivating. Collaborative groups create short multimedia stories (e.g., with presentation or video production software such as animoto.com, wevideo.com, audacity.sourceforge.net, iMovie, or Photostory). Topics can include personal stories, stories about historical figures from different points of view, community cultural stories, travel guides, or new endings to existing stories.

Guideline 4: Elicit student input in working with new technologies

Using in-class discussions, anonymous paper surveys, or online surveys (e.g., with Google forms or surveymonkey.com), educators can solicit feedback about students' technology use, including what devices they use most frequently, what frustrations they have and how you as the teacher can help, what they do with technology, and what their favourite features are. Watch students as they use technology in order to develop a sense of where they may need guidance. Things to look for include groups that are not communicating, individual non-communicative members, or members who are not allowing others to contribute. While teachers do not want to confront every group that may be experiencing difficulties in constructive communication, consistent monitoring is crucial in order to help teams that need additional teacher guidance and support.

Guideline 5: Train learners to use new technologies effectively

While many young people may be experienced with using technologies and software for social networking or entertainment purposes, they may not be as successful with using technology for learning. Training thus often needs to be provided for the following:

- **Troubleshooting** – what to do if the technology does not work, having backup plans not involving technology
- **Privacy & security** – not sharing private information, not opening unknown links, blocking uncaring individuals, informing trustworthy adults of suspicious behaviour
- **New technologies/activities** – not grading assignments using new technologies, allowing students to experiment with new technologies, moving from known to new activities, engaging in a cyclical approach to training with technologies (Kolaitis, Mahoney, Pomann and Hubbard 2006)
- **Academic honesty** – using sources without plagiarizing, checking personal writing for plagiarism (for information videos and online plagiarism checker options, see http://linguistics.ohio.edu/ELIP/?page_id=663) (Bikowski 2012a).

Guideline 6: Guide students on how to work autonomously within a collaborative environment

Teachers can help students become more autonomous with their language learning by supporting their effective use of online tools and resources, such as dictionaries (e.g., Merriam Webster, m-w.com), thesauri (e.g., wordsmyth.net), collocation dictionaries (e.g., ozdic.com), general internet search engines (e.g., google.com), or academic internet search engines (e.g., scholar.google.com). Time management and planning skills can be developed through online tools and apps (e.g., focusatwill.com, focusboosterapp.com, rescuetime.com or evernote. com). Cloud file-sharing tools (e.g., dropbox.com or *drive.google.com*) or social bookmarking tools (e.g., diigo.com) provide collaborative groups and teachers a means of easily sharing information.

Teachers can allow learners to communicate through a variety of channels. Quiet students often increase their participation in text-based communication such as discussion boards (e.g., lefora.com or forums.com), chats (englishclub.com/esl-chat/), blogs (e.g., blogger.com) or social media tools (e.g., Facebook or Twitter). Creating learning tasks that urge students to embrace and benefit from diversity and yet encourage inclusivity of all members' voices allows learners to further develop as collaborative autonomous language learners.

The stages for guiding students through this process are found in Figure 3.

1. **Preparation Stage**—Students are prepared in terms of language and context, various collaboration strategies and options, and the technology. Teachers guide students through the process of identifying language and collaboration goals.
2. **Collaboration Stage**—Students collaborate on project/task and monitor their language and collaboration progress and group goals; teacher monitors group dynamics and language use and development. Students and teachers access web-based tools and other resources as necessary.
3. **Reflection Stage**—Teachers guide students through the process of reflecting on their progress toward their language and collaborative goals.

Figure 3: Three Stages of Web-Based Collaborative Writing (Vithanage and Bikowski 2013)
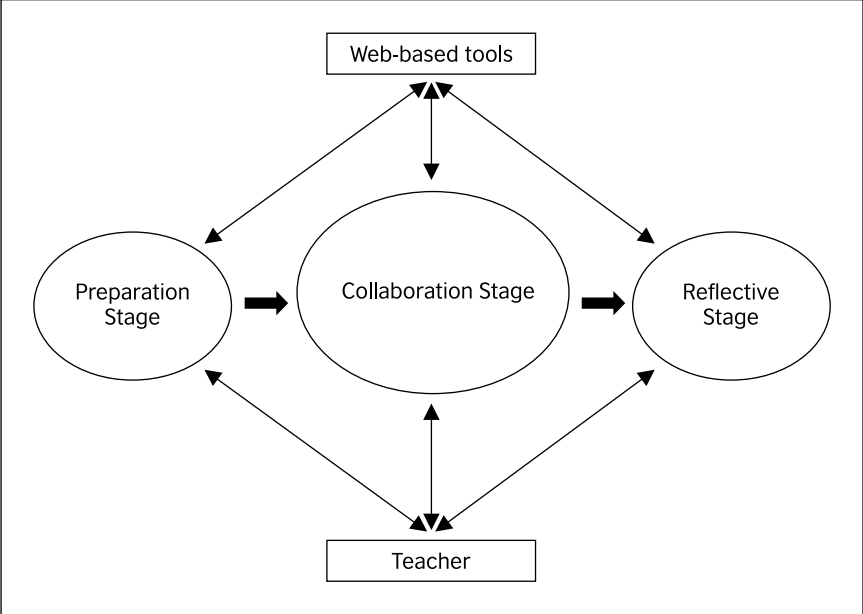
Guideline 7: Develop real-world projects that require collaboration and encourage shared learning

Real-world projects allow the students and teacher to work on a project for a client, such as a local small business, non-government organization or community group. After the teacher communicates with the client to establish a project goal, the client can communicate with the class in-person or via technology (e.g., skype. com or *plus.google.com/hangouts*) on project specifics. Student groups then engage in tasks to meet the project goal, such as finding and evaluating online information, sharing information via technology, and communicating with each other via technology (try using a tool such as zotero.org). The final stage is a presentation to the client of the project findings. An example project might be to work with a local business that wants to increase the number of young people who use their product or service.

Guideline 8: Provide clear expectations while maintaining flexibility with technology use

Student groups can be chosen by the students themselves, but it is often useful for the teacher to choose. Groups can be made that include students strong in key areas depending on the task. Informing students of their strength and encouraging them to use it for the group's benefit is helpful in developing students' collaborative skills. Students can also be given flexibility with how they will use technology to communicate, for example, at one computer together, in the same room using different computers, or in separate places but accessing online tools simultaneously. Student choices of topics or types of technology to use are also possible depending on the context.

Guideline 9: Vary assessments of collaborative experiences

Moving beyond written tests, collaborative projects can be assessed, for example, using e-portfolios. Students can choose pieces to include based on how the work shows their development as language learners. Student-generated work includes audio and video recordings of readings, oral presentations or skits; collaborative writing samples; art work; or collaborative tests and quizzes. E-portfolios can be created in presentation or movie-making software or can be put into blogs or websites (such as with sites.google.com). Rubrics can be used to guide students before they submit the assignment as well as to assess the e-portfolios. Free online rubric makers (e.g., rubistar.4teachers.org) provide guidance to teachers on possible assessment categories.

Guideline 10: Prepare students to become life-long learners of digital literacies currently unknown

Digital literacies (a term first coined by Gilster 1997) move beyond functional literacies of reading and writing a language. Depending on the context, skills such as collaboration, cultural and social understanding, critical thinking, finding and selecting information, technical skills, sociological skills and e-safety are added. Increased critical thinking, flexibility and a variety of experiences prepare students

for new technologies and new uses of old technologies. Collaborative projects offer the opportunity for students to develop not only their 'cultural literacy' (learning *about* other cultures) but also their 'cultural liberty' as they learn from other cultures (Kumaravadivelu 2008: 237).

Digital games can provide students with opportunities to engage in complex social interactions and communication while in a safe learning environment. Teachers can guide students through using Finite digital games (e.g., Trace Effects, americanenglish.state.gov/trace-effects) and infinite digital games (e.g., Minecraft, minecraft.net) for their learning goals. Figure 4 illustrates the crucial roles of learner characteristics such as curiosity and motivation, combined with teacher guidance, as they enter an engaging space such as those offered by digital games, leading to language use and learning.

Figure 4: The Language Learning Components Offered by Digital Games (adapted from Bikowski 2012b: 3).
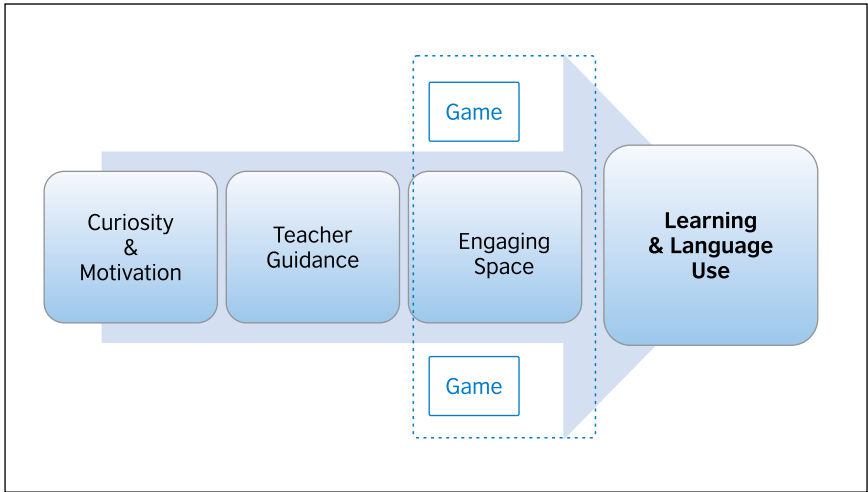
Gesture-based and immersive technologies such as those provided by Leap Motion (leapmotion.com/) or Microsoft Kinect (microsoft.com/en-us/kinectforwindows/) are becoming increasingly feasible for learning, as are applications of voice recognition, eye tracking and automated writing evaluation.

Conclusion

The Pedagogy of Collaboration within an Evolving Technology Landscape framework guides educators and students as they strive to use technology for collaboration and navigate the potentially conflicting role of autonomous collaborative learning. It highlights the importance of students contributing personal meanings and using appropriate communication strategies as they work together using interactive technologies in innovative ways. These ten guidelines remain relevant as pedagogy continues to evolve and can include various technology landscapes, including online as well as face-to-face contexts.

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Digital literacies

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Abstract

The advent of digital media has changed our perceptions of literacy. Digital literacies – the technical skills and social practices needed to effectively interact with digital technologies – are key 21st-century skills, and are increasingly important in educational curricula. What exactly are these literacies, and where might they have a place in English language teacher training? In this paper we look at the theory underpinning digital literacies, explore how teacher training courses can address them and consider the challenges involved in operationalising digital literacies in the low-resource classroom.

Literacy and digital literacies

Traditionally, literacy has referred to the basic skills of reading and writing, occasionally coupled with basic numeracy and referred to as the '3 Rs' (reading, writing and arithmetic). With the proliferation of digital media, however, commentators have come to consider a wider range of skills as figuring in a new definition of 'digital literacy'. As Clay Shirky points out (2010), 'Reading is an unnatural act; we are no more evolved to read books than we are to use computers. Literate societies become literate by investing extraordinary resources, every year, training children to read. Now it's our turn to figure out what response we need to shape our use of digital tools.' Even if we teach supposedly tech-comfy younger learners, we cannot assume that they are digitally literate. In fact, they often are not.

So, what exactly is digital literacy? Are there a series of subskills or digital 'literacies' (note the plural) that we can define? In a recent publication (Dudeney, Hockly and Pegrum 2013), we propose one way of conceptualising digital literacies. We envisage four main areas: **language**, **information**, **connections** and **(re)design**. Let's explore these one by one.

Focus on language: these are key digital literacies which focus on communication via the language of text, image and multimedia, and include:

- **print literacy:** the ability to read and produce online text, such as blog entries, tweets, emails, etc. This is clearly related to traditional print literacy, but includes an awareness of online text genres.
- **texting literacy:** an awareness of the conventions of texting language or 'txtspk' (text speak, that is, the use of abbreviations, acronyms, symbols, etc.), and of knowing in what contexts to use or not use it. Research (Crystal 2008; 2011) has shown that, far from having a detrimental effect on language standards and literacy, text speak can in fact aid literacy.
- **hypertext literacy:** understanding how hyperlinks in online text work, and

being able to produce texts with effective use of hyperlinking. Here we could include knowing how many hyperlinks to include in a text and why, what to link to, understanding the effects of over- (or under-) linking in a text, and so on.

- **visual, media and multimedia literacy**: the Internet is a multimedia medium par excellence, and we need to understand how images and multimedia (audio, video) can be used to supplement, enhance, subvert or even replace text communication. We also need to know how to produce multimodal messages ourselves, from sharing our photos on Facebook to creating video clips for YouTube. In the age of Web 2.0 we are no longer passive consumers who need to learn how to sit back and critique mass media (although this is still a key skill). We are now 'prosumers' (producers and consumers) of multimedia artefacts.

- **gaming literacy**: a macroliteracy involving kinaesthetic and spatial skills, and the ability to navigate online worlds (such as Second Life) or use gaming consoles such as the Wii. Although this may seem like a literacy unconnected to education, there is a growing interest in serious games for education.

- **mobile literacy:** an understanding of how mobile technology is transforming our world, from issues of hyperconnectivity (always being connected to the Internet), to understanding how to use geolocation and augmented reality.

- **code and technological literacy**: apart from basic technical skills (such as knowing how to use a word processing program or how to send an attachment by email), a basic knowledge of html coding can help us understand how online tools and products are put together – and more importantly, enable us to make changes to these to overcome limitations. As Rushkoff (2010) puts it 'If we don't learn to program, we risk being programmed ourselves'. We are not talking here about becoming fully fledged computer programmers, but rather about developing an awareness of the basics. Very basic coding skills can help one customise the elements in one's blog for example, or route around censorship (for good or bad).

Focus on information

- **search literacy:** the ability to search for information effectively online. This includes an awareness of search engines beyond Google!

- **tagging literacy:** knowing how to tag (or label) online content, how to create tag clouds and to contribute to 'folksonomies' (user-created banks of tags).

- **information literacy:** the ability to evaluate online sources of information for veracity and credibility. In this age of information overload, we also need to develop filtering and attention literacy so as to know what to pay attention to and what not – and when.

Focus on connections

- **personal literacy:** knowing how to create, project and curate your online identity. This includes an awareness of issues such as online safety or identity theft.

- **network literacy:** the ability to take part in online networks and to leverage these to help you filter and find information. For teachers, their PLN (Personal Learning Network) – online professional contacts – can be useful as a means of tapping into ongoing professional development.

- **participatory literacy:** closely aligned to network literacy, participatory literacy involves contributing to and participating in online networks. So not just reading professional development tweets on Twitter, but contributing your own tweets. Not just reading blog posts, but leaving comments – or even writing your own blog.

- **cultural and intercultural literacy:** understanding digital artefacts from other cultures, and interacting effectively and constructively with people from other cultures take on even more importance in our global world, where intercultural contact via digital communication is increasingly possible and increasingly likely.

Focus on (re)design

- **remix literacy:** the ability to repurpose or change already-made content in order to create something new. Literal videos on YouTube are a good example of this – see the Harry Potter literal film trailer here for just one example: http://youtu.be/MahTKZDHXaA

Clearly, then, this is a complicated mix of skills to master, and teachers can play a part in helping learners acquire some of the necessary skills by integrating them into their classroom practice alongside the regular 'content' they deal with. In this way we can make a difference in our learners' comfort level, helping them beyond the 'tech comfy' to the 'tech savvy' which will contribute to their life beyond the classroom, in the professional workplace and in our (increasingly) knowledge-based economies.

Digital literacies in teacher training

What does this mean for the English language teacher training? In my view, the key to providing teachers with the digital literacy skills they need can be achieved via a careful consideration of Training, Teaching materials and Technology.

Let's take **Training** first. A clear and thorough focus on digital literacies needs to be integrated into the delivering of all pre-service and in-service training, whether institution- or state-led. For training to be effective, a 'transmission' (or lecture-based) pedagogy needs to be replaced with collaborative models and spaces, so that trainee teachers have the necessary approaches clearly modelled for them. Mishra and Koehler's 2006 TPACK (Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge) model needs to be integrated into any teacher training syllabus. And for practising teachers, ongoing in-house continual professional development that includes work on digital literacies needs to be the norm.

Secondly, in terms of **Teaching materials**, digital literacies need to be integrated into coursebook syllabi, so that teachers understand how they can

be operationalised within the English language classroom, and closely tied to language aims. And if students are producing digital artefacts as part of their language work, then the assessment criteria for these need to be closely and coherently aligned to learning outcomes.

Thirdly, the role of **Technology** in teacher training needs to be carefully examined. Trainers and institutions need to avoid falling into the trap of thinking that the most expensive or latest gadgets are the most effective. When choosing technology or devices, institutions (or Ministries of Education) need to clearly identify the economic pressure groups involved, and to carefully examine to what extent the technology really does lead to improved learning outcomes. The case of IWBs (Interactive Whiteboards) is a salutary example of how entire governments have wasted vast amounts of money with nothing to show for it in terms of improved learning outcomes (see Hockly 2013). As a rule of thumb, institutions would be well advised to allocate 80% of their budgets on teacher training and development, and 20% of their budgets (or less) on any technology, whether hardware or software. At the end of the day, it is vital to ensure that technology is always subordinate to learning aims and outcomes.

And if you need one final reason to start integrating digital literacies into your English language classes, here are some sobering words from Henry Jenkins:

> What [students] do in their online lives has nothing to do with the things they are learning in school; and what they are learning in school has little or nothing of value to contribute to who they are once the bell rings.

Although Jenkins (2009) is referring to mainstream secondary schooling in the USA, his words are a strong reminder of the pressing need to make education both relevant and motivating for our students in the 21st century. As communicative English language teachers, we are in a good position to marry a focus on digital literacies with a focus on language itself – and in the process to make our classes both more relevant and useful for our students. And as teacher educators, we have a duty to ensure our teacher trainees not only know this, but know what to do about it in their classrooms.

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Also see this list of resources about digital literacies:

http://www.theconsultants-e.com/resources/ToolsResources/DigiLit.aspx

Do online group tasks promote effective collaborative learning experiences? Teacher perceptions

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Abstract

The discussion board tasks and small group projects in online teacher education courses facilitate collaborative inquiry, as teachers process information, think reflectively, share and construct knowledge through the experiences that each of them bring to the tasks. In view of their potential for creating an environment that is conducive for collaborative learning, this paper investigates whether the participants of e-teacher courses perceive their experience of participating in the group tasks to be truly collaborative. Based on the author's experience of participating in a course on Critical Thinking for Language Learning and Teaching, and the perceptions of e-teachers obtained through a survey questionnaire, the paper argues that, while there are a few facilitative factors that promote positive interaction in the discussion board tasks, factors like group grading, different time zones, lack of group monitoring and mediation by the instructor, and lack of orientation to collaborative group work impede effective collaboration and learning in small group projects. The paper discusses the factors and the implications for the design and implementation of collaborative tasks in online teacher education courses.

Introduction

'Collaboration promotes social construction of meaning in a professional community of inquiry' (Garrison 2005: 15).

The aim of online teacher education courses is to provide not just knowledge and content (which is readily available even without formal enrolment in a course), but access to a rich learning environment that provides opportunity for interaction and connectedness, leading to enhancement of reflection and critical thinking skills. It has been argued that incorporating well-planned collaborative tasks into teacher education courses generates better learning, reflection, higher order thinking and communication skills, through the active co-construction of knowledge during peer-to-peer and peer-instructor interactions. A great deal of research in this area also indicates that the collaborative process can result in better motivation, higher performance and enhanced thinking, as learners achieve richer knowledge generation through the creation of shared goals, shared exploration and a shared

process of meaning making. (Garrison and Anderson 1999; Garrison and Archer 2000; Palloff and Pratt 2005) (Cited in An and Kim 2007).

Although a significant amount of research has cited the benefits of collaborative learning in online learning environments, there are studies that show that learners can perceive the collaborative learning activities as frustrating experiences (Capdeferro and Romero 2012). While participants appreciate the opportunity to interact and work with fellow group members, they seem to find consensus decision making and production of a product much less satisfying (Dirkx and Smith 2004). Difficulties with interpersonal issues and trying to ensure that all group members do their share seem to cloud their initial enthusiasm. In addition, communication and interaction limitations caused by technology only serve to exacerbate these concerns, which then become a channel for frustrations. Dirkx and Smith (2004: 134) found that learners are often reluctant, frustrated and dissatisfied with collaborative learning methods, especially when working within small online groups, because they 'struggle with the development of a sense of interdependence and intersubjectivity within their online groups, but end up holding fast to subjective, individualistic conceptions of learning'. These perceptions and experiences often generate a profound sense of ambivalence when learning and working in a group.

Given these critical viewpoints and the dearth of empirical studies on teacher perceptions of collaborative learning experiences, this paper attempts to investigate how e-teachers perceive their online collaborative group learning experiences, in order to gain fresh insights into the design and implementation of collaborative tasks in online courses.

Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning is based on the constructivist theory that recognizes knowledge as a socially constructed process, a synthesis of social experiences. It is predicated on the following premises: (a) learning is a social act; (b) learning is an active process; (c) learners benefit from others' knowledge and viewpoints; (d) dialogue and active involvement promote learning; and, (e) learning takes place when learners critically reflect on their knowledge (Smith and MacGregor 1992).

Collaborative tasks in E-teacher courses

In E-teacher courses, collaborative learning is facilitated through threaded, prompt-based, weekly discussions on complex pedagogic issues in which the entire class participates as a group, and also through small group/pair work tasks and projects that are assigned to groups of two/three teachers in the course. For example, in the course on *Critical Thinking for Language Learning and Teaching*, collaborative learning tasks consist of:

- **discussion board tasks** that involve writing weekly discussion posts based on readings (asynchronous communication and interactions), and replies to each other's postings, questions and ideas. It is generally observed that there is positive interaction, deep reflection and shared learning in the threaded

discussion tasks as these are well structured and demand responding to others' comments, elaborating an idea or sharing an experience within a specific timeframe. The contributions are assessed individually

- **small group tasks and projects** like analysing a course using intellectual standards, designing a lesson plan in pairs, peer reviewing and feedback on each pair's plan using specific criteria, revising the lesson plan based on feedback obtained from another pair, designing a unit plan in a group, commenting on another group's unit plan using specific assessment criteria, revising unit plans based on feedback from instructor and other groups. During peer feedback, teachers comment on an assignment/project for the purpose of becoming adept at formulating and receiving critical comments based on certain criteria. These tasks receive group grades and individual contribution/ participation is not assessed.

In the course, Blackboard (learning management system) is used for posting instructions and for monitoring the discussions in the discussion board. While working on projects, teachers also use additional tools (e.g., social networking tools, phone, Skype, e-mail), as group projects entail continuous sharing of ideas, readings, drafts and suggestions for revision. For more than 70% of the course time, teachers are required to do collaborative work in dyads or in triads to complete weekly tasks and assignments within strict timelines.

The study

Since collaborative tasks are integral to the courses, it was felt necessary to investigate the teachers' perceptions of their collaborative learning experience, in order to understand what factors facilitate/impede effective collaboration on the course. Therefore, an opinion survey questionnaire (Appendix) was administered to teachers who participated in the courses.

The questionnaire consisted of sixteen questions pitched at two levels: at the personal level, the teachers reflected on their collaborative community learning experiences, their personal gains, and the factors that facilitated and impeded successful collaborative learning in the group projects. At a general level, the teachers evaluated factors like positive interdependence, promotive interaction, individual accountability, consensus building skills, positive group leader, that are considered to be 'essential elements of cooperative learning' (Johnson and Johnson 2004: 787), in the order of their perceived importance, and also commented on the impact of factors – cognitive conflicts arising from differing perspectives, group grading, different time zones, lack of orientation to group work – on successful collaborative learning. Also, the teachers' suggestions for enhancing collaboration in group tasks were obtained through an open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire. The purpose of the questions was to promote teacher reflection on factors that can lead to effective collaborative learning in online courses. Twenty teachers (12 males and 8 females) participated in the study.

Data analysis and interpretation

In the first part of the questionnaire, the teachers were asked to reflect on their online collaborative learning experiences and identify the factors that led to successful completion of the tasks. Other than personal factors like self-motivation, respect for diverse views, the teachers mentioned factors related to course structure-collaborative environment and sharing of knowledge through group discussions and peer reviews, good instructor and feedback strategies, and the asynchronous mode of delivery, as significant for the successful completion of group tasks. The factors are categorized in the table below.

Figure 1: Factors for successful collaboration

Personal factors	Course factors	Technological factors	Instructor factors
- Self-motivation - Reflection - Recognizing and respecting diverse views - Open and frank discussions - Prompt responses - Willingness to share responsibilities	- Asynchronous model - Clear and easy online delivery platform	- Good instructions (and objectives) for each task and the feedback of the facilitators of the course - Moderator's comments and questions	- The collaborative environment and sharing of knowledge through group discussions and peer reviews - Clear course structure, instructions

The data pertaining to teachers' opinion on the nine facilitative factors, with relation to their role and importance for successful collaboration, was coded as a percentage for each factor. This helped to represent the information visually in a bar graph, highlighting the relative importance of each factor.

Figure 2: Facilitative factors (in %)
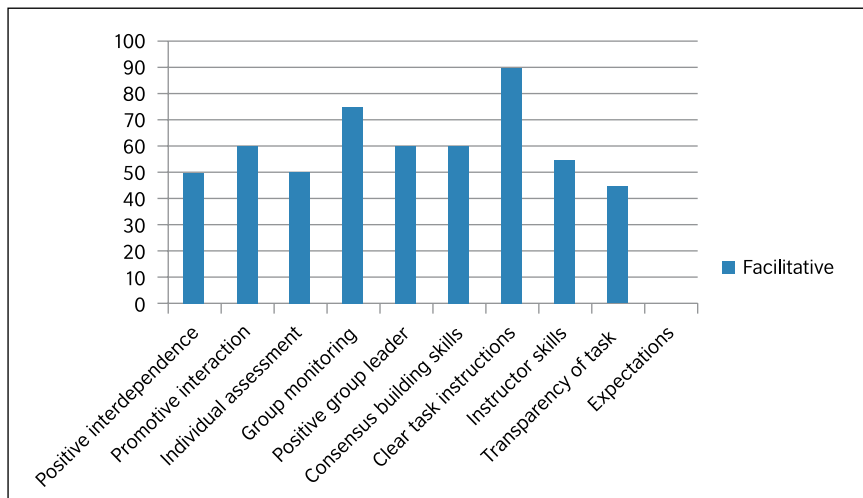
As the graph indicates, from the percentage of responses (90%), teachers consider clear task instructions to be an important facilitative factor for successful completion of group tasks. This is followed by factors like group monitoring (75%), promotive interaction (60%), the presence of a positive group leader and consensus building skills (60%). 55% of teachers also felt that instructor skills in creating and managing group interaction are important for sustaining an environment of collaboration. The teachers' opinions on these factors are presented below.

Figure 3: Facilitative factors – teacher statements

Factor	Opinion statements
Positive interdependence	Because it gives everyone equal chance to improve and grow
	Yes, as we say in Arabic one hand cannot clap.
Promotive interaction	Your ideas are either supported or challenged by others. So, there's a great deal of interaction that is positive and constructive.
	Greater camaraderie and exchange of ideas is possible.
Individual account-ability/assessment	The accountability of the group is a synergy of that of each member.
	Each member is responsible for his/her own learning as well as that of the group as a whole
Group monitoring	Group monitoring is also important because a trainer can lead the group on the right track.
The presence of a positive group leader	Positivity triggers creativity. Instructor as a positive leader can maximize group learning
Consensus building skills of the group	It's a useful skill because trainees come from different countries and they need to learn how to come to a consensus.
Clear task instructions	Well-stated clear instructions are crucial so that there's no ambiguity
Instructor skills in creating and managing group interaction	It is super important because it is the instructor who builds a friendly atmosphere and rapport between the participants.
Transparency of task expectations	It minimizes disappointments and conflicts and maximizes learning output by situating it in the global picture of its use.

Since one of the aims of the questionnaire was to ascertain what factors acted as an impediment to effective collaboration in small group projects, the teachers' opinion and comments on their experiences were invited. Interestingly, the analysis of the six factors in Figure 4 (bar graph) shows a significant convergence on two impeding factors: lack of orientation to collaborative group work (75%) and cognitive conflicts (60%).

Figure 4: Impeding factors
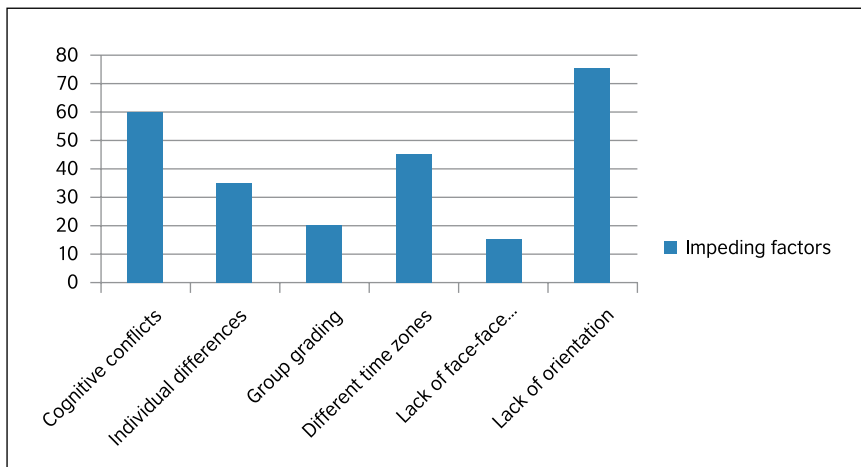
As is evident from some of the teachers' statements – 'Orientation is very important as it gives an insight into what to do and with whom. People from different cultures have different attitudes to collaborative group. It's important to specify its essence and prepare learners adequately to achieve mutual goals' – there seems to be a real need for prior training in preparation for collaborative group projects. With regard to cognitive conflicts a teacher voiced the view that 'differences in understanding and the inability to work around these differences can seriously hamper group work'. Some teachers (45%) also felt that 'different time zones can impede collaborative learning because group communication is often affected'.

In order to stimulate the teachers into reflecting on ways of overcoming the impediments, the final part of the questionnaire invited suggestions for enhancing group work. Some of the insightful responses are presented below.

Figure 5: Teacher suggestions

- Efficient mentoring for each group; interim feedback; accessible mechanism for conflict resolution; appropriate tools and resources and continuous motivation.
- Instead of random grouping, a pattern should be followed with countries in different time zones.
- The course leader should pitch in to clarify certain concepts, consolidate the discussions and present a summary at the end.
- Sometimes face to face interactions are also required, at least using Skype or webinars.
- For collaboration, I think provision of on-line class for all at the same time would also give a deeper understanding of each other thoughts, ideas as it would lead to more of interaction and discussion
- The tasks should be well-designed and appropriate for collaborative work.
- Guidelines for peer assessment should be clearer to make the collaboration more meaningful.

> - Assigning specific tasks/roles to different members within the group then regular exchanges and monitoring will enhance collaboration in online group tasks.
> - Group tasks should be preceded by some small initiatives whereby the members get to know each other; since they are not likely to have met or seen each other.

The findings from the graphs and tables have significant implications for online course design in two areas: collaborative task design and implementation, and instructor/instructional strategies.

Implications for collaborative task design and implementation

Since the collaborative tasks in online courses provide an opportunity for teachers to apply the principles and knowledge gained in the course, and to share previous experiences and insights with teachers from different contexts, it is imperative for course designers to design tasks that provide productive, engaging and skill-building spaces to encourage meaningful interaction. The tasks have to be intrinsically motivating, appropriate for group work, contextually relevant and lead to *real* sharing of ideas and meaning making. For example, peer reviewing of group projects enhances meaningful collaboration; however, the task of designing a lesson plan for an imaginary group of learners by a group of teachers who teach at different levels – primary, secondary, tertiary – would neither be authentic nor appropriate.

While incorporating collaborative tasks it is also important to maintain a balance between structure (clarity of task expectations, clear objectives and guidelines) and learner autonomy (flexibility of task interpretation). The course design should allow for flexibility, such as choice of group membership based on interests, time zones (one of the teachers has suggested that group membership should be based on time zone to facilitate easy interaction), membership role and innovative perspectives on the given topic. This will lead to enhanced learner engagement, and the sense of the relevance of the task will be heightened.

While implementing group work, as some teachers have pointed out, there is a need for changing the 'group constitution for each task so that the participants get a chance of working with different people'. Also, it is useful to allocate responsibilities to different members (like 'monitor', 'chaser' or 'tail-twister'), and ask groups to nominate their members for each role to ensure a more focused discussion.

Implications for instructor/instructional strategies

The fact that 90% of the teachers have indicated a lack of orientation to group work as a major impeding factor for successful collaboration in online small group tasks reflects the need for training the participants (in planning and negotiating skills in particular) prior to the group tasks, to facilitate learner readiness and to provide scaffolding for the tasks. This is important because teachers are often ill-equipped through their previous educational experiences to collaborate (in general) or peer-review, and also the social milieu of online activities is quite

different from in-person interactions, thus requiring new skills and behaviour. Therefore, it would be useful to *include an orientation component that will teach participants not only how to collaborate to learn but also learn to collaborate.*

One other factor that teachers have considered to be important for facilitating effective collaboration is group monitoring (75%). It is suggested that group conferences and exchanges in the group projects should be monitored closely by instructors, and timely feedback should be given on the process and direction when necessary, to prevent groups from getting stalled or going off-course. This would also help to ensure that each member is contributing to tasks in equal measure. It is often noticed that instructors have a dynamic presence in the weekly discussion board tasks as they monitor the discussions and provide continuous guidance to focus on the course goals by utilizing a technique called 'weaving' (a skill that involves using a part of a teacher comment in a posting and redirecting it to the main topic without an explicit negative value judgement), but they do not monitor the progress of the group project or the contribution of each member to the project regularly. On the other hand, *group processing* might be necessary to suggest new paths to explore the topic, or intervene if the project seems to be falling short of expectations.

A related way to ensure learner participation in online collaboration is to demonstrate the value of group learning by assessing both the product and the process of group work (Swan, Shen and Hiltz 2006). It is perhaps important for instructors to assess individual performances in group work so that the teachers who contribute substantially to the group task do not feel that they have had to carry more than their fair share of the workload in a group, or have received a grade that does not reflect their level of contribution to a group project. As one of the teachers stated 'some members work much more while the others do not. So, group grading sometimes causes discouragement. It can be a dampener.'

Since computer-mediated communication is at the core of online collaboration, a range of tools that promote dynamic exchanges needs to be used, as the asynchronous mode can sometimes be an impediment for negotiation of difficult issues that require quick responses and timely intervention. It is therefore suggested that tools that are more suitable for collaborative learning (wikis, Skype in particular), be incorporated into virtual classrooms in a systematic way. A few teachers have suggested that 'participants should have IT and web skills, and face-to-face interactions are also required at least using Skype or webinars'.

Conclusion

There appears to be a strong argument for including collaborative tasks in online courses as they promote positive interdependence and interaction, provide a supportive learning community, and lead to the development of meta-cognitive knowledge, critical thinking skills and reflection (100% of the teachers acknowledged this in the survey).

However, in order to generate a truly educative and meaningful group learning experience, it is necessary to periodically reconceptualize the design and implementation strategies of collaborative projects in the courses. Assumptions about what impact specific strategies have on learner behaviour need to be tested constantly. Also, a clear understanding of teacher perceptions of online collaborative learning experience through meaningful end-of-course feedback, in the form of 'short narrative reports/semi-structured interviews on the quality of collaboration pertaining to each task rather than a generalized questionnaire-based response' (to quote a teacher) is important, because the experiences and perspectives teachers obtained through the courses will in turn influence their willingness to implement collaborative learning methods in their classrooms.

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Sample survey questionnaire

DO ONLINE GROUP TASKS PROMOTE *EFFECTIVE* COLLABORATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES?

An opinion survey

Dear teacher

This survey aims to gather information on ***your perception of collaborative learning in E-teacher courses, with specific reference to group tasks/projects.*** Could you please reflect on your own online group work experience in the course that you have participated in and complete the survey form? The information will be used for research purposes only.

Your participation is greatly valued and appreciated.

Meera Srinivas

A. Personal information

1. Full name:
2. Country:
3. Gender:
4. Age:
5. Professional position (*teacher, trainer, school administrator, independent educational consultant, other)*:
6. Location of work:
7. Years of professional experience, with details:
8. Reasons for enrolling in E-Teacher courses:

B. Questions pertaining to your online collaborative learning community experience
(Please provide honest and detailed responses)

9. Please check all of the communication methods you used during group assignments.

- Telephone ☐
- E-mail ☐
- Skype (video calls) ☐
- Instant messaging or other types of synchronous chatting methods ☐
- Group Discussion Board ☐

10. Which communication methods did you utilize most in completing group assignments/projects in your course? Why?

11. List the factors which helped you to successfully complete the online group tasks in the course.

12. List the factors, if any, that *you think* impeded the successful completion of the 'online' group assignments/projects in your course.

13. In what ways has participating in online group tasks/projects helped you? *(Tick whatever is applicable to you)* It has:

   a. led to the development of metacognitive knowledge ☐
   b. provided a supporting learning community ☐
   c. given me a new understanding of the use of online tools ☐
   d. fostered higher-order thinking skills ☐
   e. made me more reflective as a teacher ☐
   f. ………………………………………………………………………………………
   g. ……………………………………………………………………………………….

14. In your opinion, how important are these factors for promoting *effective* collaborative learning? Give reasons.

Factors	Very important	Important	Not important	Reasons
Positive interdependence (each member thinks that they cannot succeed unless the group does)				
Promotive interaction (each member acts as trustworthy members by acknowledging and challenging others' ideas and efforts)				
Individual accountability/ assessment				
Group monitoring				
The presence of a positive group leader				
Consensus building skills of the group			-	
Clear task instructions				
Instructor skills in creating and managing group interaction				
Transparency of task expectations (requirements for group work to be specified in the course syllabus)				

15. It is generally stated that the following factors can impede collaborative learning in group projects. For each factor, say whether you agree/disagree and give your reasons.

Factors	Agree/Disagree	Reasons
Cognitive conflicts		
Individual differences in learning styles		
Group grading		
Different time zones		
Lack of face-to-face communication opportunities		
Lack of orientation to collaborative group		

16. What suggestions do you have for *enhancing* collaboration in online group tasks?

Thank you for completing the survey.

Reflective feedback using video recordings in ELT pre-service teacher training programmes

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Abstract

Video recordings of micro teaching of ELT teacher trainees can help them reflect on their own teaching. This paper, which is based on a tryout with a group of ELT teacher trainees at the Institute of Language Teaching, Jamnagar, presents the possibilities of using video recordings of sequences of teaching language as tools for reflection to assist trainees to become insightful and realistic about their own teaching. By enabling them to watch their own video-recorded lessons in ELT pre-service teacher training programmes, we can assist trainees to reflect on their teaching and thereby help them become autonomous learners. This view is endorsed by the responses of the trainees in the study.

Introduction

Micro teaching is one of the most important components of pre-service English Language Teacher training programmes. The aim of micro teaching is to bring prospective ELT teacher trainees to the real world of teaching where they are guided first to observe the trainers' demonstrations and then plan lessons in groups in order to teach their peers and obtain feedback from both peers and trainers. This crucial part of pre-service training requires careful thought and planning. The objective is to help trainees become insightful and realistic about their own teaching practices by guiding them to discover their own strengths and weaknesses in teaching and helping them find ways to improve their classroom performance.

Self-reflection

Reflection is crucial at every stage of teaching and training, but this is often neglected in pre-service teacher training programmes or left to the trainees to 'reflect' without any assistance from the trainers. As reflection applies to all educational situations and is essential to life-long professional development (PD) (Wallace 1981), it is important to provide opportunities to the trainees to self-reflect on their own teaching. Self-reflection encourages teachers to develop the skills of viewing the teaching process thoughtfully, analytically and objectively as a way of improving classroom practices (Richards 2002).

Though 'self-reflection' is not a mandatory component of micro teaching in the Indian context, there is always the possibility of making it a valuable addition to practicum and a vital and indispensable element of pre-service ELT teacher

training programmes (Tuga 2013). When trainees are first introduced to various approaches, methods and techniques of language teaching, they should be given an opportunity for safe experimentation (Orlova 2009). Micro teaching helps them apply techniques based on various methods of language teaching and get constructive feedback from both peers and trainers. Along with this feedback it is also necessary to guide them to self-reflect on their own teaching to gain confidence and thereby develop their teaching skills. Since a video recording has a well-known motivating effect (Wallace 1981) and allows trainees to view it as many times as they want to self-reflect, I decided to record a sequence of micro teaching with the consent of a group of B.Ed English trainees.

Context of the study

The study was conducted with a group of 34 B.Ed English trainees at the Institute of Language Teaching, Jamnagar. This programme (B.Ed English) is designed to develop the communicative competence of the trainees as well as their pedagogic competence. Most of the trainees are from regional-medium colleges, hence their competence in English is low, especially in speaking. However, they are highly motivated and are ready to accept and adopt technology in teaching and learning language skills. Since the Institute does not have the resources to use high-definition videos for recording teaching, we decided to use mobile phones.

Self-video recordings: rationale

Video recording is an objective and permanent resource for self-reflection, and is reliable and durable. Trainees can view it any time at any place at their own convenience. It acts as a tool for observing various aspects of classroom practice and has a special value for non-native English-speaking trainees because it enables them to reflect on their communicative competence and pedagogic competence (Orlova 2009). It also assists them to reflect on non-verbal aspects of teaching and key aspects of classroom interaction. Self-video recording is intended to assist teacher trainees to produce a real-time record of teaching work and help them look back on their professional development. This will therefore serve as a foundation for their continuous professional development (CPD).

The experiment

Video recording of teacher trainees could be a 'sensitive' issue in Indian contexts. It is therefore important to convince them that it would help them notice their strengths and weaknesses in teaching language. It is also important to make sure that they are not too conscious of being recorded and get tense. With this in mind the tryout was carried out with 34 ELT teacher trainees at the Institute of Language Teaching, Jamnagar when the micro teaching was scheduled. Micro or peer teaching is a compulsory component of B.Ed English and therefore trainees have to take five lessons on different language skills, for example, teaching speaking and listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. They are supposed to work in groups of four to plan the different stages of a lesson. Hence they were divided into groups and each group was helped to plan a lesson. Each member of the group would take one stage of the lesson with the peers as the

class and the observers. The trainees were given the freedom to choose one of their friends to record his/her teaching on a mobile to ensure that the recording would be cost effective and not threaten the teacher. The recordings of seven to ten minutes' teaching were later saved on pen drives and given to the trainees to view at their own convenience. They were given reflection forms which contained a set of questions to help them reflect on their teaching. A sample reflection form is given below.

Figure 1: Sample reflection form

- Whether your instructions were clear
- Whether your body language was appropriate
- Whether your questions were relevant
- Whether you involved the whole class
- Whether you talked too much (in Gujarati? Or in English?)
- Whether you were too fast or too slow
- Whether you made any serious errors (grammar/vocabulary/accent)
- Whether you were able to achieve your objectives

Self-viewing and reflection

The trainees were allowed to view their own recorded teaching at home to make it less threatening to their self-esteem. They could view it alone as many times as they wanted and thereby gain confidence. This first viewing itself helped them raise questions about their teaching. They later looked at their peers' and trainers' questions for a deeper reflection. Most of them asked *"How is my English?", "Am I confident or nervous?", "Do I speak very slowly?"*, etc. Daxa, for example, was worried about her speed of delivery. Her friends also noted that she spoke fast and used the filler *ahh, ahh* often, which she agreed with. Vijay's response was different*: "First, I was not ready to watch my video, but gained confidence and watched it alone. I found myself teaching and it was a good experience." "We have a lot of fun, this is the first time I listened to my own recorded voice in English, and I made a lot of errors,"* said Sheetal. The trainer's questions *like "Do you think your instructions were clear?", "Do you think you tried to involve the whole class?"*, etc. guided them to watch the video again and helped them reflect on their teaching skills and language use.

Viewing video with a friend/friends

The second phase of video reflection was to view the recordings with a friend. The rationale of this task was to stimulate greater self-awareness as both of them might have things to share and gain from each other's observations. They compared their video recordings and invited questions on their teaching and received constructive feedback. They later invited the trainer to view their teaching and got motivated to reflect critically on the recorded teaching sequence. This was different from the phase when they viewed the video alone. For example, when

they viewed the video by themselves, they mainly focused on language errors, voice modulation and confidence, but when they viewed it again with a friend or the trainer they reflected on class interaction, sense of involvement and appropriate use of questions and techniques.

Participants' response

Based on the guiding questions, they submitted a brief report on their teaching of each micro lesson. The pre-service teachers appreciated the video recordings as they would serve as a permanent record of their lessons. For example, Daxa wrote: *"Yes, it's a very good way of watching your performance and observing your way of teaching. After seeing my video I came to know about my pluses and negative points, which I can think about when I plan lessons next."* Hemangi said: *"This video recording helped me find out my mistakes, errors in pronunciation, and helped me improve my confidence. I think it is good to catch my negative and positive points. It feels good."*

Though they experienced difficulties such as apprehensions of being recorded on a mobile and low quality of the video, they came to believe that the recordings helped them improve their classroom management skills and skills of teaching English. Initially they were wary about being recorded as they thought the video might be misused. However, when they were given the freedom to choose their own friend to record their teaching, they gained confidence and were ready to be recorded. There were questions about the quality of recording with a mobile and there were problems of external noise. This was minimized in the second round of recordings when we used high-quality smartphones.

The self-reflection enabled them to identify their areas of strength and weakness, especially in the use of English. For example, Ratan wrote: *"I was able to engage the class but my English was so poor I made a lot of errors in tenses",* while Chandini focused on handwriting and use of vocabulary on the chalkboard. She said, *"My chalkboard writing was bad, and I even made errors in spelling. I wrote* irrigation *instead of* irritation*, which the observer did not notice".* They realized they needed to worry about their body language, improve their accent and knowledge of language functions, and their interaction with the students. Sonal's response supports this view: *"I was standing in one place the whole period, and I addressed most of the questions to only Ramesh."* *"I read the whole poem in a single breath and never looked at the class while reciting it, and I addressed questions to only two participants,"* was Jay's response. Others commented that they looked confident, gave clear instructions, were able to ask relevant questions, and tried to involve the whole class.

Viewing the video alone or with a friend gave the trainees a lot of confidence and they were able to identify what was missed in the peer/trainer feedback. Most of them talked about their body language: their posture was not appropriate and they did not smile at all. These minute issues, though relevant in language teaching, might be missed in the trainer's feedback. The recording also gave them

a chance to share their teaching experience with family members, and this eased their tension as they received a lot of support from them. Jasmina's response on viewing her video with her husband was: *"My husband and my kids watched my teaching and praised me. The kids were happy to see Mummy in a film, and so I've decided to keep it forever!" "I showed my video to friends who are teachers. They said nothing like this is done in their school, and they appreciated my presentation,"* wrote Nisha. These responses show that trainees valued the video recordings immensely. They had gained considerable confidence in facing a classroom and expressed their readiness to be recorded again for self-reflection.

Implications

The video recording of micro teaching and the self-reflections of the trainees underline the possibilities of using mobiles to record teaching sequences and the importance of making it a compulsory component of an ELT pre-service teacher training programme. Teacher trainers should realize the significance of video-recording as it would enable trainees to shift their focus of reflection from superficial features of classroom management to key pedagogical issues. They should be ready to use video recordings (mobile recording for cost effectiveness) in both peer teaching and real classroom teaching and help promote self-reflection.

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Using audio lessons for the visually impaired in inclusive classrooms: an exploratory study

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Abstract

This paper explores the possibility of making print materials, specifically the language textbook, more accessible to visually impaired learners who have been mainstreamed in regular classrooms. This is done to facilitate their participation in classroom activities and help them engage more meaningfully in the learning process. The study has employed prior knowledge of listening skills for an individual's cognitive development. Three lessons from the English textbook used by schools affiliated to the Andhra Pradesh State Board syllabus were presented in an audio format (as Mp3 files) to eleven visually impaired (partially sighted and legally blind) learners from nine schools. Modifications for the prescribed tasks and activities at the end of the lesson were carried out in order to generate self-reliant participation of the target group to identify learning. Response sheets were provided using Braille and large-print answer sheets to encourage participation. Analysis shows the target group were better performers when provided with necessary support using advancements in the print media and audio technology. On the other hand, the findings proved to have disadvantages for the Braille learner after they had been mainstreamed into regular schools.

Introduction

> *Education must aim at giving the blind child knowledge of the realities around him, the confidence to cope with these realities, and the feeling that he is recognized and accepted as an individual in his own right.*
> (Berthold Lowenfeld)

Despite the existence of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act (1995) and Article 45 of the Constitution of India, which states that the State should 'provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years', a very small percentage of such people have access to education. A meagre 5% of visually impaired students have been enrolled in mainstream schools

despite the fact that this fundamental right is dictated and protected by the Constitution of India for more than 66 years now. The presence of students with visual impairment pursuing degrees in higher education prompted us to enquire into challenges faced and met by them in their school years. Through informal interviews and discussions, it was revealed that many such participants faced problems specific to accessing print materials usually used in the classrooms. This prompted us to investigate such problems a little more as they may be the reason why there are so few such participants in mainstream classrooms.

Background

Participants excelling in special schools are recommended for enrolment in mainstream schools after certain necessary skills such as mobility (being able to use a white cane), academic skills (ability to read and write Braille), computer skills (to access information) have been taught. Such participants find themselves among the greater population of the class as the odd ones with special needs. They find accessing material is a challenge as they are not provided with the necessary Braille materials in the regular classrooms. Instead, teachers cater for the needs of students who are partially sighted whenever possible by providing A3-size sheets in large font format. However, these materials do not last till the end of the academic year. Visually challenged students are usually provided with scribes during examinations. They prefer advanced learners to be their scribes during examinations as students from lower levels of study or administrative staff members may make errors in writing the answers, or they may interrupt the flow of thought of the participant concerned while (s)he is dictating their answers to the scribe. Such students find advanced learners to be more patient and effective in helping them perform at their best within the given time.

Teachers, on the other hand, do manage to generate materials that can help at least the partially sighted students to participate. Many teachers, however, ask how they can allow a visually impaired student to use Braille when they themselves cannot read Braille. Not many teachers are trained to face such situations, and they are left to adapt to institutional procedures, which usually focus on the needs of the majority. In such situations they are required to design new materials, which is evidently not possible in the case of Braille. They are therefore completely dependent on the institution to address the special needs of the participants enrolled.

Institutions do realize the fact that infrastructure to meet such special needs has to be created, provided the State makes available teachers with the necessary training and adequate support staff. If schools are to provide education to visually disabled students, they should be able to establish a materials development department for special needs or the Government should find ways to meet the demands of visually impaired students. Computer laboratories need to be equipped with user-friendly software, which is usually very expensive. However, even if the cost is met, trained staff to assist the users should be made available.

The study

The purpose of this study was to examine the possibility of making the coursebook, prescribed by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, more accessible to the visually impaired learners in mainstream schools.

Due to the nature of the problems mentioned earlier, the population ratio between regular students and visually impaired students per class is 25:1. It should be noted that students are promoted to join mainstream schools after they acquire the necessary skills to participate and perform in class including mobility skills, academic skills specific to Braille literacy, and computer skills. In the existing situation, we were able to identify only 11 visually impaired participants from 9 different schools. In this target group 7 participants were Braille users (legally blind) and 4 were large font users (being partially sighted). They had been mainstreamed to join grade 7. In order to study how they adapt to new methods in mainstream school we chose our target group from standard 8. This we thought would help us investigate their current academic progress.

Hypotheses

1. Modifying the reading passages in the textbook and presenting them in the Mp3 audio format would provide greater accessibility to the content of the lessons. Students would be able to access print material and would not need to depend on their peers or parents to read out lessons to them, thus making them independent 'readers'.

2. A smaller file format would facilitate repeated use at home and at school without the need to erase the files for future use. Easy storage capabilities keep usage-related problems at bay and are also helpful to those who get promoted the next academic year.

3. Using the multiple choice and true/false question format to present the exercises at the end of a reading passage (such as comprehension questions, word study, usage and grammar) would allow visually impaired students to answer questions just like their sighted peers.

4. The use of large font and Braille response sheets to code their responses would allow us to assess the comprehension of our learners. It would also provide them with an opportunity for self-assessment and this could have a further effect on their motivation to learn.

Design of the study

The study was conducted in four phases. Phase 1 consists of the design and administration of a questionnaire. In phase 2, the most significant part of the study, we show how the units chosen from the textbooks were modified in terms of format and task types to suit the needs of our target group. In phase 3, we discuss how the materials are to be used in the classroom. Using the feedback gained from the earlier phase with regard to the efficacy of the materials, we made further modifications to them. This forms phase 4 of the study.

Questionnaire

Section 1 is designed to elicit information about the participants' personal information such as name, age, level of study and details of parents. Such data helped us make profiles of each participant and learn about how they got support at home from parents and family members. Section 2 elicited information about the participants' current classroom experiences with the language teacher. This helped us generate information on teacher practices and methods to cater for special needs. Section 3 is designed to obtain information about the participants' access to other resources such as the computer, the Internet, or any specific software used to access textual data for classroom assignments both at school and at home. Section 4 gives us information about examination procedures practised in school, the students' attitude to examinations, and the scribes provided during examinations. Having obtained relevant information to address questions of participation and access to information, the second phase of the study was attempted.

Modification of materials

Phase 2 of the study was divided into two parts. The first part was to analyse the lessons in the language textbook prescribed by the Andhra Pradesh State Board. The analysis was carried out in terms of (i) the number of units, (ii) the presentation of these units (i.e. the number of pages per textbook, the font size used), (iii) the language skills and areas covered by the post-reading exercises at the end of the unit, namely, comprehension, spelling, word study, language use, usage and grammar, and writing. We then decided to use three units for the purpose of the study:

1. My Struggle for an Education: Booker T. Washington
2. With the Photographer: Stephen Leacock
3. The Seventh Mandarin: Anonymous

The second was to provide access to the textbook and its units; therefore the units were recorded in the studio in Mp3 format. This was meant to help learners store and save the Mp3 files for extended use. To increase comprehensibility and proper learning, task types were modified so that the students could perform on their own without the need for a scribe.

Modification of task types and format

Multiple choice post-reading tasks were given in audio format to ensure learner participation and to make them independent. By providing the answers and asking them to choose the right one, we were able to assess their understanding of the task as well as the language item they had learnt with regard to grammar, vocabulary or language function. They were then required to mark their responses on specially designed Braille and large font OMR answer sheets. The following table provides the profile of units used and its contents and its design to make the textbook user-friendly.

Table 1: Profile of units used

S.No.	Layout of the unit	My Struggle for an Education	With the Photographer	The Seventh Mandarin
1.	No. of paragraphs	15	11	27
2.	Notes & meanings	27	29	21
3.	Comprehension	15	10	20
4.	Spellings	12	12	15
5.	Word study	19	26	15
6.	Language use activity	13	Oral activity , 1	14
7.	Usage and grammar	9	8	5
8.	Writing activity	2 activities Response in 2 or 3 paragraphs	2 or 3 paragraphs, 2 activities.	2 activities Response in 2 or 3 paragraphs

The table above shows the number of paragraphs and activities in each unit recorded as an Mp3 file. For example, the first unit 'My Struggle for an Education' is in 15 paragraphs in the textbook. Therefore, an Mp3 file named after the lesson consists of 15 Mp3 files of just the text paragraphs. This is the method used for every activity and indicated by the serial number given. The textbook itself is user-friendly in terms of presentation, the paragraphs consisting of not more than five sentences each, making it easier to remember the text in smaller chunks. Bold fonts, italics, quotation marks, etc. give the reader essential clues to meaning; this was necessary for our target group also to notice. Therefore, for a tactile and auditory learner we decided to provide such clues in the audio file by using a male voice and a female voice. For example, the title of the lesson was read out by the female voice and the remaining paragraphs by the male voice. For synonyms, the difficult words were read out by the male voice and the meaning was provided in the female voice.

Efficacy of the modified materials

In order to determine whether our materials were effective, we evaluated the learners on each of the tasks and tabulated their scores. This was not meant to test them. Rather, it was meant to determine whether two of our hypotheses had been proved: that the use of modified task types would help students answer post-reading tasks independently thereby increasing motivation and make print more 'accessible' to them. The following tables provide a gist of their comprehension through the scores they achieved from the first two units out of the three mentioned previously.

Table 2: Number of correct responses to the questions in 'My Struggle for an Education'

Participant	Sec. I (14)	Sec. II (9)	Sec.III (6)	Sec. IV (7)	Sec. V (5)	Sec. VI (41)
Santosh Kumar	13	9	5	7	5	39
Bernard	14	9	5	7	5	41
Raghu Ram	14	9	5	7	5	41
Madhan Mohan	14	9	5	7	5	41
Annie	14	9	5	7	5	41
Sara Kiranmayee	8	9	5	4	5	31
Kumar Swamy	14	9	5	7	5	41
Naga Bhavanisilpa	14	9	5	7	5	41
Bhanu Prasad	14	9	5	7	5	41
Nagesh Reddy	14	9	5	7	5	41
Prathyusha	14	9	5	7	5	41

Note:

- Sections I-V refer to the activities (MCQs, T/F, Yes/No).
- The number within brackets indicates the number of questions in each section.
- The total number of questions for the writing activity is 41.
- The first seven students mentioned above are legally blind and the remaining four are partially sighted.

Table 3: Number of correct responses to the questions in 'With the Photographer'

Name	Sec. I (9)	Sec. II (8)	Sec. III (17)
Santosh Kumar	9	8	17
Bernard	9	7	16
Raghu Ram	9	7	16
Madhan Mohan	9	7	16
Annie	9	7	16
Sara Kiranmayee	9	7	16
Kumar Swamy	9	7	16
Naga Bhavanisilpa	9	8	17
Bhanu Prasad	9	8	17
Nagesh Reddy	9	8	17
Prathyusha	9	8	17

Note: Refer to the previous table.

Scores indicate that the target group were able to comprehend the lesson successfully and complete tasks related to it, thereby providing evidence for our hypothesis that presenting modified texts and materials in the Mp3 audio format would provide greater accessibility to the content of the lessons.

Conclusion

Relevant literature indicates that the concept of 'access' is one of the main research areas in visual impairment education. Having examined the existing problems of the target group in mainstream classroom, this study attempted to make English accessible to the target group by adopting some alternative formats.

We began with the hypothesis that presenting print material in an audio format (Mp3) would make it more accessible to our learners. A smaller file format would facilitate repeated use in school or at home. The theoretical support for this came from two core areas: (i) research in reading which shows that listening and reading are closely linked, and (ii) research in the area of multimedia as an alternative means of literacy for those whose access to print is limited.

We also hypothesized that using the multiple choice and true/false question format to present the exercises at the end of the reading passage would give learners a sense of satisfaction at being able to complete these tasks independently thereby increasing their motivation levels. The fact that they were able to complete the post-reading tasks well before their peers in class motivated them enormously and the performance was at its peak. Attention must be drawn to the fact that the task types modified for greater participation proved to be user-friendly for our target group and made scribes redundant. In our informal interviews we learnt that our students are unable to practise Braille reading or writing in mainstream schools. This highlights the fact that certain students when mainstreamed lose the literacy skills acquired in special schools. Due to non-availability of Braille materials in mainstream schools, they are in danger of becoming unable to access Braille print altogether. This has implications for decision makers at the school and government levels.

Therefore, we should take prompt steps to introduce audio lessons to impart better learning to visually impaired learners instead of making their world darker by forcing them to learn through inaccessible textbooks.

Testing reading abilities of the visually impaired using scribes/technology

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Abstract

Reading is a complex and cognitively demanding process that requires chunking. But visually impaired learners have to read a text word by word whether read out by a scribe or with the use of technology.

Reading comprehension tests have both global and local questions, and not always in a linear order. To answer these questions, therefore, a reader has to go backwards and forwards within the text. This is a capability taken for granted by sighted learners but causes immense problems for a visually impaired student. Paragraphs are rarely numbered and questions do not indicate the location of the answers. Good scribes 'identify' appropriate paragraphs; technology only enables word/line/paragraph skipping. Paragraphs in reading comprehension tests for visually impaired students should therefore be numbered and local/specific questions should indicate the paragraph they refer to.

The attempt made in this paper is to compare the differences in performance of sighted and visually impaired students using three parallel reading comprehension texts, read out by scribes and by technology, with and without numbering and indication of answer location. The performance of the two groups of students and the time taken is compared and presented along with a qualitative analysis of a retrospection done by the visually impaired learners.

Introduction

The ability to read has been and continues to be indispensable and fundamental to education. Reading, in general, involves the ability to comprehend and interact with written text either in print or in the electronic mode. In academic contexts, this ability is expected to increase because, as students' progress in their academic levels, the demand of reading increases enormously. Thus, reading is arguably the most essential skill for success in all educational contexts. It also remains a skill of paramount importance in the context of general language assessment and testing. This is because most formal tests use the written word as a stimulus for test-take responses and reading performance is a prerequisite for certain tasks even in oral interviews (Brown 2004). The visually impaired learner/reader/test taker (the VI learner/reader/test taker hereafter) therefore, in the context of testing, is at a disadvantage as reading involves the ability to decode print and understand the meaning of the text. VI learners, if they cannot access

a text through Braille, have to 'hear' texts either read out by a scribe or with the use of a screen reader. Moreover, a VI learner cannot run his/her eye down a text to either skim or scan it. This implies that the very 'construct' of reading ability is different for a VI reader. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to problematize the construct of the visually impaired learners' reading capability and explore plausible alternatives.

Understanding reading capability of the visually impaired

Reading is usually defined as 'the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print' (Urquhart and Weir 1998: 22). It is also perceived as a complex task which involves both visual (print) and non-visual factors such as motor coordination, motivation and cognitive ability.

Visually impaired learners access their reading either through Braille or through a human/screen reader. Cost effectiveness, length of text and durability are serious concerns with Braille. It is also not preferred these days due to advances in technology. In the twenty-first century, therefore, most VI learners use a scribe or rely on technology.

When a text is read out to VI learners they cannot visualise the orthography of the language. As a result, they become print disabled. If the 'reader'/scribe fails to articulate or draw attention to text features like punctuation, capitalization, underlining, bold, italicization, and differences in fonts and indents, VI learners may not completely comprehend the text. Decoding skills like letter recognition, understanding word boundaries, and text chunking becomes near impossible.

Graphemes are purely a visual input and the identification of letters entails the ability to match letters and sounds which, in turn, enables the development of the understanding of words and spelling patterns. Even with the use of technology/scribe, graphemes cannot be perceived by visually impaired learners. They can be perceived when texts are read in Braille, but it involves tactile reading and has its own problems.

Word boundaries are conventionally represented, in writing, by spaces between words. When a VI reader uses Braille, word boundaries can be perceived but when texts are accessed through a scribe or a screen reader, identification of word boundaries is difficult.

Chunking is the grouping of words in a sentence into short meaningful phrases. A good sighted reader does this automatically but it has to be done for the VI test taker by the scribe. If the reader/scribe parses words wrongly, or chunks differently, comprehension gets affected.

Problematizing the reading assessment of VI learners

Reading tests very often test certain important sub-skills like careful reading, skimming and scanning, both at the global and local level (Urquhart and Weir

1998). Skimming and scanning require the ability to move the eyes rapidly over the printed text to locate specific information or get a quick sense of the gist of the text. It is an important speed-reading technique. VI learners, by contrast, have to listen to each and every word in the text as it is read out to them.

Texts of varying length and complexity are used to assess reading capability. The information in these texts could also be presented in a linear or cyclical manner and links within and across paragraphs indicated overtly or covertly. Sighted learners can easily move back and forth within the text to access the required information and make necessary connections. For the visually impaired learner such 'cyclical' reading is time-consuming and laborious.

More importantly, in the context of a reading test, VI learners have to rely on the scribe's ability to skim and scan the given text and 'ask' whether a particular paragraph which may have an answer to a question needs to be re-read by him/her. If the test is being taken by the VI learner using technology, he/she can only 'ask' the screen reader to read and re-read the whole text laboriously to enable such skimming and scanning to happen. To ensure that it is the capability of the VI learner that is being tested and not that of the scribe, all paragraphs must be numbered and questions should carry paragraph numbers next to them. This will also aid the VI learner who is using a screen reader to access a particular part of the text.

The study

The argument made in this paper is that, if paragraph numbers are marked and each question carries this number next to it, a VI reader who is taking a reading comprehension test will be able to answer the test more easily and will also be able to exhibit his/her own capability.

For the purpose of this study, five visually challenged learners and five sighted learners with varying levels of proficiency (registered for courses ranging from BA to PhD) were asked to take tests of reading comprehension. There were three parallel expository reading texts, with eight multiple-choice question (MCQ) items each. In the first text paragraphs were not marked, while in the second and third texts paragraphs were marked and paragraph numbers indicated next to each question. The first two tests were taken by both sighted and visually impaired learners (with the help of a scribe). The third test was taken only by the visually impaired learners with the help of a screen reader. The performances across these tests were compared.

A retrospective interview that dealt with comparisons and contrasts across text performances and modalities was also conducted with the visually impaired test takers. The impact of paragraph marking and indication of paragraph number next to the question was one major focus. The other was to find out scribe/technology preference for testing.

Interpretation of test results

An examination of the test results shows that the VI learners were able to perform comparatively better when paragraph numbers were marked and the texts were read out by the scribe. This information is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Range of marks, time and mean

	Visually impaired			Sighted		
	Range of marks	Mean	Time taken	Range of marks	Mean	Time taken
Text 1	2 – 6	4.2	13 – 30 ms	3 – 7	5	6 – 21
Text 2	3 – 6	4.6	13 – 26 ms	2 – 6	4.2	5 – 20
Text 3	3 – 5	3.9	37 – 71 ms	--	--	--

When one looks at the range of marks and the mean of the VI learners for scores in tests 1 and 2, there is a slight difference. The minimum mark has changed from 2 to 3 and the mean has also increased by 0.4%. By contrast, the performance of the sighted learners across these two tests shows that both the minimum and the maximum mark was reduced by 1. Their mean has therefore dropped by 0.8%. One can therefore tentatively conclude that marking paragraphs has helped the VI learners perform better but that it has not really aided the comprehension of the sighted learner.

When one compares the scores of tests 2 and 3 (taken only by the VI learners) it is clear that the maximum score has come down by 1 mark and the mean has dropped by 0.7%. Test 3 had to be taken with the use of a screen reader. One could argue that this decrease in marks could have been caused only by non-familiarity with technology under test conditions. But even though paragraphs were marked, the table shows that the time taken for this test was much more than the other two tests. The VI readers stated in their interview that they had other problems with the use of technology for testing.

It is interesting to note that, with reference to time, both sighted and visually impaired learners spent less time with test 2 where paragraphs were marked and the numbers of paragraphs indicated next to the corresponding question. Sighted learners took only one minute less to complete test 2 when compared to test 1. By contrast, the VI test taker took a good 4 minutes less. The maximum amount of time taken (more than three times as much as the time taken by the sighted learner to complete one test) was by the VI test taker who had to rely on the screen reader, JAWS.

Thus, one can tentatively conclude that a VI test taker prefers a human reader, or rather a scribe, to the use of technology when he/she has to take a reading comprehension test. The marking of paragraphs and indication of answer location, it would seem, aids better comprehension. This was stated in many ways by the five VI learners who participated in the study.

Perceptions of the visually impaired of reading comprehension tests

VI learners prefer human readers to screen readers for various reasons including a non-metallic voice, accessibility and the ability to search for a particular paragraph to find an answer. As one test taker put it, 'Because of the human voice there is life in the reading, which makes comprehension better' [V3]. He went on to add: 'With technology the screen reader's voice is not comprehensible because the voice is mechanical and metallic.'

The problem of accessibility was mentioned by another VI learner. In his own words, 'a scribe can stop the text while reading and go to the question and come back to start where I left' [V4]. One needs to understand that when using a screen reader VI test takers cannot directly go to a particular part of the text that they need to go to. Instead, they have to read from the beginning of the paragraph at least. In the process of such searching, VI learners' comprehension tends to get affected. While reading with a screen reader, after reading the question, numerous keyboard commands also have to be given in order to locate the exact part of the text where the answer can be found. This can be described as a 'processing gap'. It is also much more demanding; a sighted learner can 'indulge' himself/herself by processing and reprocessing the text to find answers. The VI test taker has to get technology to work for him. He/she has to keep count of paragraphs and lines and then 'command' technology to go where needed. Care with such commands complicates and sometimes even delays the process of comprehension.

A screen reader cannot also be commanded to highlight parts of a text, while it is being read, the way a sighted reader can. As one of the test takers put it: 'I can ask my scribe to underline or write short notes on important points while reading' [V4]. Another problem is that searching and identifying the place where the answer has to be indicated/written is also time-consuming with a screen reader. As a test taker put it, 'with the screen reader, after reading the question, I again go back to read the text. When I go back to answer I have to search for the appropriate box to indicate or write the answer. The scribe can do that in no time' [V2].

Thus, one could conclude that scribes would be preferred by VI learners when they have to take comprehension tests. This does not mean, however, that test taking with scribes is problem free. The proficiency of the scribe, or rather lack of it, can even lead to non-intelligibility in reading. As succinctly put by a test taker: 'Wrong parsing and mispronunciation result in misinterpretation of text' [V1].

The scribe's attitude can cause even more problems for the VI test taker. Scribes are just that: paid to do a job and therefore not committed to the process of test taking. They are often reluctant to read and re-read a text and questions. One of the test takers spoke on this at length: 'After all it is not the scribe's test, therefore, they don't want to read the text again and again when asked for. This is one of the major problems with scribes, where learners are forced to memorize the text in order that they can answer the questions without asking the scribe to read again and again' [V1].

One solution posited in this paper to counter some of these problems is to mark paragraphs and indicate the location of answers. All five test takers valued this modification. First, they felt that it helped them with time management. All five had variations of the same statement: 'I need not to read the whole text again' (*sic*). It was perceived as immensely helpful; as explicated by a test taker: 'it is wonderful to have marked paragraphs' (V2). One of them compared this experience with using technology and said: 'When I went to answer the questions with Jaws, I tend to forget the questions. Since paragraphs are marked I could concentrate better' (*sic)* (V2).

Three others (V1, V3 and V5) asserted: 'I could directly go to the paragraph and answer the questions.' One test taker went to the heart of the matter when he stated: 'It is useful for the scribe, who need not to search for the paragraph and lines' (*sic*) (V4).

This implies that when paragraphs are not numbered, and the location of answers not indicated for VI test takers, more often than not, particularly when questions test skimming and scanning, it is the capability of the scribe that is being evaluated. This is much more problematic and worrying than construct-irrelevant issues like a metallic voice, accessibility and extra time taken affecting test performance (Bachman 1990).

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Technology-mediated language teaching through a Kindle-based mobile learning initiative in India: the access experience

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Abstract

The search for and study of appropriate digital technological applications in ELT classrooms continues to impact the development of pedagogy, yet teachers and students lack opportunities for reflecting upon their experience of handling technology in the language classroom. The study is based on a pilot study project funded by the Regional English Language Office (RELO), American Centre, New Delhi and facilitated by the Academic Staff College of the Aligarh Muslim University as part of the Kindle Mobile learning initiative in India. The paper is based on the use of Kindle technology by 337 young learners enrolled in four English Access Microscholarship programmes at Aligarh, Bhubaneswar, Kochi (Aluva) and Kolkata. In keeping with the scope of the project, the use of the Kindle technology relates to the development of strategies for the integration of pre-loaded content, continuous evaluation and troubleshooting. The starting point of this paper is to see how Kindle technology is used for getting young learners to motivate themselves for language learning when opportunities are created outside the formal conventional English classroom.

Introduction

In recent times research has reported evidence of teachers using learning technologies and adapting them to their classrooms. The 1998 UNESCO World Education Report on teachers and teaching in a changing world describes the radical implications Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have for conventional teaching and learning (Traore and Blankson 2011). Wickman (2009) believed that 'students would not be prepared for the real world and the expectations of employers unless they are given an opportunity to use technology' (cited in Cravens 2011: 35). The tech-savvy generation is catching up with technological changes since it has dramatically changed the way people communicate and exchange information (Akyol 2010). Zhao and Lai (2008) point out that technology encourages active practice and helps to eradicate the 'filter' of anxiety as identified by Krashen (1982).

The E-reader is an emerging reading device and is becoming increasingly popular because it is light and comfortable to read. There is an enormous library of e-books available on the web.

Access Program at Aligarh, Bhubaneswar, Kochi and Kolkata

The UGC Academic Staff College at AMU, Aligarh, the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) in Bhubaneswar, the Sir Syed Group of Schools in Khidderpore, Kolkata, and the Centre for Information and Guidance in Aluva/Cochin have been hosting the Access Program sponsored by RELO, USA since 2007. The programme aims at 'including the excluded' and supports indigenous minority, non-elite, underprivileged and tribal students. A minimum of 240 instructional hours is fixed beyond school hours for providing English language proficiency training to 200 students.

Objectives

Since Kindle-learning research is still in its infancy, the amount of available primary research studies is not significant vis-à-vis other fields of study like e-learning. While the topics reviewed in other E-literature reviews have undoubtedly added to the field, none of the research was found to be specifically focused on student perception of using Kindle technology. It is against this background of Kindle use in the ESL classroom and perceptions of young learners that the following research questions were formulated:

1. What teaching strategies can be developed for the integration of preloaded content on the Kindle in the context of Access classes?
2. How best can 'Kindle-assisted language teaching' be assessed through continuous evaluation based on quantitative (attitude, motivation and technology use surveys) and qualitative research instruments (lesson plans and video transcription of classroom observation)?
3. What is the level of learner motivation to use Kindle technology in ESL classes?

Methodology

The study used a mixed research design based on qualitative and quantitative research instruments. Quantitative surveys which follow later are further cross-referenced with the qualitative data obtained through the transcription of video data of classrooms observed at the four centres.

Questionnaires were designed to investigate the young learner's ability to use the Kindle, attitude and motivation regarding the use of Kindle technology and pre-loaded language activities in the device. These questionnaires were designed on a five-point Likert Scale.

Kindle lesson plans and video transcripts were employed to provide a clear picture of the classroom activities, and the methods and strategies used by teachers in order to find out how far the participation and involvement of learners seemed evident in the learning process.

Data collection procedure

The method for collecting information for the project was to approach the key

contacts within relevant Access centres in India already identified for the 2011-13 Access programme in India. This made the collection of a large body of data feasible within the short time span allotted to the project and meant that the respective centres were responsible for the administration of entries in the survey and the accuracy of returns. Survey database input templates originally designed by the AMU Access Kindle assessment team were used, to which participating Access institutions had access via email. Coordinators and trainers acted as interlocutors with teachers and students in Access institutions and arranged the compilation of entries, with assistance from the Project team scheduled in phase-wise timeline communication, including on-the-spot assessment visits to the Access centres by the Kindle assessment project team.

Data processing

The analysis of data was done through lesson plans designed for Kindle use and transcription of video files of the classrooms observed at the four centres. Video recordings and transcripts were maintained to provide an authentic record of the Amazon Kindle lesson plans in action, the classroom events, teacher's movement, gestures, use of body language, environment of learning, and other contextual aspects of the lesson. To enable a closer analysis of the data, contextual aspects of the lesson were captured to provide evidence of discussion, and analysis based on quantitative surveys was attempted. The descriptive statistics obtained through survey findings were cross-referenced with the video data.

Sample

A total of 337 participants aged 14-16 years old took part in the survey including 110 participants from Aligarh, 110 from Bhubaneswar, 45 from Kochi/Aluva, and 78 from Kolkata.

Question 1: What teaching strategies can be developed for the integration of preloaded content on the Kindle in the context of Access classes?

A typical scenario that emerges is in the form of presentation of language activities using the pre-loaded text and tasks on the Kindle. Students are engaged in the use of technology in a teacher-led interaction session mostly in the form of question and answer sessions or instructions given to operate the various Kindle functions for developing listening, reading and vocabulary skills. (See Table 1.)

81-98 per cent of learners reported looking up words in the in-built dictionary (see Table 1c). Similarly, vocabulary learning became easier (see Table 1a). Doing the activities in the form of a vocabulary quiz competition increased the learner's motivation for finding new words (see Table 1b). In addition, learning with pre-loaded texts provided more exposure to predicting and acquiring contextualised vocabulary. For younger learners the Kindle became a motivating source of authentic reading and listening comprehension via vocabulary games, and they seemed to have become aware of pronunciation as well as new vocabulary. (See Table 2.)

Table 1: Vocabulary development

		Agree %	Undecided %	Disagree %
a. Vocabulary learning through the Kindle is easy for me.	Aligarh	95	5	0
	Bhubaneswar	96	3	1
	Kolkata	95	5	0
	Aluva	98	5	0
b. Vocabulary through topic-based information is easy for me to learn through the Kindle.	Aligarh	97	3	0
	Bhubaneswar	85	2	13
	Kolkata	97	3	0
	Aluva	100	0	0
c. Look up words in the in-built dictionary.	Aligarh	81	14	5
	Bhubaneswar	98	12	0
	Kolkata	81	14	5
	Aluva	81	19	0

Tables 1-6 are amended on a 3-point scale for data presentation purposes from the original questionnaire which was distributed to the participants. All of the data is presented in percentages.

Table 2: Reading

		Agree	Undecided	Disagree
a. I am delighted to read stories loaded in the Kindle.	Aligarh	100	0	0
	Bhubaneswar	95	3	2
	Kolkata	100	0	0
	Aluva	96	4	0
b. Having the latest technology in reading skills is important to success.	Aligarh	83	17	0
	Bhubaneswar	85	15	0
	Kolkata	83	17	0
	Aluva	80	0	20
c. Improving reading speed is possible through the Kindle.	Aligarh	95	5	0
	Bhubaneswar	95	4	1
	Kolkata	95	5	0
	Aluva	98	2	0

Since reading from the Kindle E-Book reader was a new experience, it increased interest for more reading, and 80-85 per cent of the learners claimed that the technology was important to their success (see Table 2b). Moreover, the in-built dictionary in the Kindle helped the learners to find new words without seeking the help of the teacher and also facilitated text comprehension. 96-100 per cent of respondents from all the centres enjoyed reading pre-loaded stories while a significant proportion of respondents (95-98 per cent) felt that Kindle use might improve their reading speed (see Table 2c).

A high percentage of students (90-99 per cent) enjoyed the text-to-speech function, which enabled 83-88 per cent to listen to and understand native speakers of English. 90-95 per cent of learners from Aligarh, Bhubaneswar and Aluva felt that the listening and speaking activities might help to improve their fluency.

Question 2: How best can 'Kindle assisted language teaching' be assessed through continuous evaluation based on quantitative (attitude, motivation and technology use surveys) research instruments?

It can be seen from Table 3 that the ability to handle digital functions has a significant role to play in enhancing English learning. The digital functions that made learners more comfortable were operating the menu, text-to-speech and highlight functions (see Table 3j), changing the font size, and switching the Kindle off and on (see Table 3). This was evident in the learners' efficient handling of text-to-speech, select and homepage functions (Appendix 1c). Not many learners were comfortable with typing data on the Kindle (see Tables 3c and 3d). (See Table 3.)

Question 3: What is the level of learner motivation to use Kindle technology in ESL classes?

82-98 per cent of respondents felt that the Kindle technology improved their learning. Very few of the participants had a negative attitude to using the Kindle (4c, 4d). The majority of the participants had a positive attitude towards using the Kindle technology. They reported that working with technology was a kind of collaboration with the teacher and fellow students, which gave them a strong sense of independence. (See Table 4.)

The study, by and large, reported ample evidence of the effective use of the Kindle. Nevertheless, there were instances of difficulties relating to troubleshooting, reflected in nearly 29 per cent of the respondents from Aligarh, 18 per cent from Bhubaneswar and 29 per cent from Kolkata. 16 per cent from Aluva were unable to perform troubleshooting functions. Only 24-42 per cent of respondents performed on an average level. This problem was further compounded by difficulties experienced in rebooting and resetting by way of a frozen screen and the device not being charged on a regular basis.

Table 3: Using Kindle functions

		Good	Average	Poor
a. Student is able to use the Kindle technology. Switch On/Off	Aligarh	90	8	2
	Bhubaneswar	94	5	1
	Kolkata	89	5	6
	Aluva	89	11	0
b. Put the Kindle on standby	Aligarh	80	15	5
	Bhubaneswar	82	17	1
	Kolkata	87	10	3
	Aluva	82	18	0
c. Type text	Aligarh	50	45	5
	Bhubaneswar	53	35	12
	Kolkata	63	15	22
	Aluva	53	35	12
d. Numbers and symbols	Aligarh	55	40	5
	Bhubaneswar	55	43	2
	Kolkata	55	18	27
	Aluva	65	32	3
e. Delete entered text	Aligarh	85	13	2
	Bhubaneswar	70	27	3
	Kolkata	54	23	23
	Aluva	47	27	26
f. Change font size and screen aspects	Aligarh	70	25	5
	Bhubaneswar	88	11	1
	Kolkata	80	5	15
	Aluva	68	32	0
g. Enable/Disable text-to-speech	Aligarh	90	8	2
	Bhubaneswar	85	13	2
	Kolkata	83	17	0
	Aluva	92	8	0
h. Use the menu key	Aligarh	84	8	8
	Bhubaneswar	86	9	5
	Kolkata	89	11	0
	Aluva	82	12	6
i. Highlight the text/paragraph	Aligarh	60	37	3
	Bhubaneswar	64	35	19
	Kolkata	60	37	3
	Aluva	94	6	0

Table 4: Motivation

		Agree	Undecided	Disagree
a. Use of Kindle technology in a lesson increases my learning.	Aligarh	98	1	1
	Bhubaneswar	89	5	6
	Kolkata	98	1	1
	Aluva	82	10	8
b. I learn my lesson better when I get the chance to use the Kindle.	Aligarh	97	3	0
	Bhubaneswar	88	2	10
	Kolkata	97	3	0
	Aluva	88	2	10
c. I am bored when the Kindle is used in the classroom.	Aligarh	0	1	99
	Bhubaneswar	18	0	82
	Kolkata	0	1	99
	Aluva	0	1	99
d. I am not interested in using the Kindle.	Aligarh	0	1	99
	Bhubaneswar	21	2	77
	Kolkata	0	1	99
	Aluva	3	0	97

Limitations of the study

Whilst the mixed research techniques adopted here have given learners a platform to report what they do when using Kindles in specific contexts, no attempt was made to statistically measure the different occurrence of variables. This study explicitly focuses on the learning-teaching perspective of the use of Kindle technology in an Access classroom context that normally goes beyond traditional school learning hours. There is a need to replace the pre-loaded narratives on profiles of great persons in the Kindle with familiar settings and scenarios like the school, family and neighbourhood, allowing young learners to internalise and predict contextualised vocabulary. Future studies in less-controlled situations need to employ observational research designs to add a new dimension to this work. However, it is recognized that video recording followed by transcription work of this nature is extremely time-consuming and therefore costly in terms of manpower deployment.

Conclusion

Findings indicate that when students are given opportunities to practise language skills by way of using technology, they feel more confident about their understanding and take chances (Wartinbee 2009: 13). This is also possible in the case of Kindle technology since Kindle use is clearly 'situated' and is dependent on the Access context. It is assumed that this might work in contexts outside the formal English classroom though it may not be entirely replicable.

The data suggests that students made extensive use of materials pre-loaded on the Kindle sometimes relying on both their native language and English. They recognised the value of accessing information in the English language through the Kindle. They appeared to have made considerable use of the Kindle, and there may have been acquisition of English language skills, particularly listening, speaking and reading. When learning was captured through the video recording, learners became self-conscious and thereafter the element of fun was less noticeable.

The study concludes that we need to go beyond traditional frameworks of teacher training for understanding, using and investigating the applications of technology in language pedagogy, and Kindle-assisted Language Learning (KAAL) is a way of offering opportunities for training teachers to handle troubleshooting issues and to keep up high motivation levels.

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Exploring whole class to one feedback and revision using technology in a writing classroom

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to document the experience of an intervention that focused on developing the writing skills of first year engineering students at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Indore. The exigencies of classroom procedures and pragmatic considerations make it rather difficult for the teacher in mixed ability classrooms to pay attention to students who do not write very well. A two-pronged attempt was made to resolve the problem of teaching writing in large ESL classrooms. Firstly, through 'peer group writing' students with better writing skills provided scaffolding for learners who did not have appropriate writing skills. This is in line with collaborative learning preceding and promoting individual development. Secondly, technology (track changes and comment in MS Word, multimedia language laboratory) was used innovatively within the classroom to enable peers and the teacher to provide opportunities for whole class feedback and revision. For this to happen, over many classes the essays written by each group were displayed on the projector, commented on and revised by the class collaboratively. These writing activities will further the process of building writing strategies.

Introduction

'Writing is central for our personal and social identities, and we are often evaluated by our control of it' (Hyland 2002: 1).

Writing skills are widely recognized in industry as having a clear impact on career advancement. Employers and teachers have long been concerned about students whose poor written English prevents them from reaching their full potential. Singh (1990), in a nation-wide survey under the Need-based English for Science and Technology (NEST) at the Curriculum Development Cell of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, concluded that:

> *Discourse is the very essence of traditional EST at a higher academic level, but training in the art of technical and scientific writing must be given to students during the college years. Our students are keen to be taught the style of scientific and technical writing as they are quick to recognize the writing areas most needed for their careers.* (Singh 1990: 27)

Faculty members and administrators in IITs and other engineering colleges generally agree that it is important for students to gain the ability to write

effectively as part of their undergraduate education. Most students in IITs, even at the entry level, regard English as the provider of vocational opportunities to obtain a well-paying job, upward social mobility and a means to success in their academic pursuits.

Flaws in the present system

Exigencies of classroom procedures and pragmatic considerations make it rather difficult for teachers in the widely found mixed ability classrooms to focus desired attention on students who do not write very well. Usually these student writers think that writing is a 'timed one-shot-activity' that begins with the first sentence in the first draft and ends with the last sentence of the same draft. Being part of large classes and with a heavy workload, these students do not write enough and this in turn fuels a poor self-image and a feeling of inadequacy.

Good writing is never one shot or timed. It is a step-by-step process interspersed with prewriting, drafting and revising to refine the text, but this rarely happens in Indian ESL contexts. Correction itself takes up time and revision even more. Some students' idea of revision is merely to copy out the rough draft in ink. Their concern about the 'accuracy of their language also truncates their idea generation' (Perl 1979).

Although technology provides facilities like track changes and comments (MS Word) they are hardly used by teachers in ESL Indian classrooms. Evaluation procedures are norm-referenced, which provides little information to teachers, students and parents as to what students can or cannot do.

The ebb and flow of constructive criticism is important for learning. Universities conventionally put forward a top-down model of criticism, much of which is linked to pointing out errors and assigning marks. The horizontal student-to-student and self-critical aspects of this flow are rarely cultivated (Jha 2004: 99).

Damage control

Effective writing skills are of top importance for the IITians. The good news is that students are aware of their own difficulty in writing. It is therefore imperative that they are offered help with writing, and the criteria for assessment of a task made familiar to them. The teacher needs to step out of the traditional role of the reader, which has been to evaluate the learner's first draft as if it were the learner's final draft, and assume the role of a consultant facilitating the learner's step-by-step creation of the text (Dharem 1995: 160).

Although evaluation is an important part of the education process, it has failed to really involve and benefit the individual learner. There is a need to shift the focus from assessment of learning to assessment for learning; evaluation will then become an integral part of the teaching-learning loop (Durairajan 2013: 35). Approach to learner evaluation should be descriptive, illuminative, interpretive and dynamic. Tharu (2014) asserts that 'the ongoing assessment conducted during

the programme (sessional testing) needs to be geared to forward progress from a base level rather than a "negative distance" from the final target. Progress levels (milestones) should be criterion referenced with specifications of mastery linked to the priority assigned to the relevant segment in the content units of the course.'

The study

The aim of the present study was to examine the benefits of feedback in multiple mode technology on the writing skills of first year engineering students at IIT Indore. An ancillary aim was to study the impact of increased clarity regarding evaluation criteria on their writing. It was hypothesized that scaffolding writing techniques through peer-editing, and feedback debriefing sessions guided by evaluation criteria would significantly improve student-writers' writing. The researcher's underlying pedagogic concern was to create an environment conducive to revision of drafts and thereby to help students see the 'learning process in action'.

The sample of learners

The subjects in the study were 40 first year students (38 males and 2 females) at IIT Indore. They had been placed in a 15-week foundation course HS: 157 - *English Language Lab*, which ran through the first semester (August to November 2013) based on their performance on a screening-diagnostic test. They showed low comprehension and a low capacity to write and speak in English. They were from low-income families and some were first-generation school-goers. They also had varied linguistic backgrounds.

Components of the intervention

The instructional lesson covered five types of writing tasks: paragraphs, descriptive essays, narrative essays, opinion essays, and comparison and contrast essays. For each of these text types students went through a cycle of prewriting, drafting, whole class feedback and revision. The specific learning targets were:

- wider knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- engagement in awareness activities such as conferencing on plans and drafts, peer editing, reformulation and checking accuracy
- increased knowledge of assessment criteria to judge quality of writing, which guides informed decisions about how to revise drafts
- knowledge and appreciation of the collaborative and social aspects of writing.

Methodology

The methodology followed in the writing classes was based on the concept of scaffolding which points to sustained support for the student-writers' endeavour to create texts. Donato (1994), cited in Cotterall and Cohen (2003), explains the concept of scaffolding as follows:

> *In social interaction knowledgeable participants can create, by means of speech supportive conditions in which the novice can participate in, and extend, current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence.* (p.40)

Various scaffolding techniques can be used to help novice learners develop their writing skills. Help can come from the teacher and importantly from more able peers. Scaffolding is especially important in the language classroom, as negotiation of meaning and linguistic assistance are both crucial to students' development (Kayi-Aydar 2013: 324).

The preparation for individual writing tasks included interactive lecturettes, presentation of a predetermined essay structure, and an evaluation grid. Ongoing support came from teacher conferences. Students with better writing skills helped informally to provide models and/or support to their less advanced peers. Initial discussions usually focused on what kind of information might be expected in each paragraph of the essay.

Every class session (organized once a week) lasted for three hours and included a review of the day's learning, feedback from student-writers and an opportunity for them to arrive at an individual action plan for the following session**.** The emphasis was on stimulating introspection and critical reflection in a non-threatening environment, wherein every student writer could try out ways of expressing ideas in the drafting-revising process leading to the first version finally submitted. The very process of reflection is a powerful resource as through it we integrate new learning with our previous experience and that of others. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) believe that through self-reflection students learn how to collaborate with their peers effectively, exchange ideas, co-construct meaning, revise their understanding, and share meaning with others – all of which helps in developing a meta-perspective on their own learning.

The teaching-learning transaction went through the following stages.

Stage 1: Orientation
The objectives, contents, evaluation scheme and methodology of the writing skills development were explained in the introductory lecture. Attributes of effective writing were made clear and a handout on tips for effective writing was provided. Students were asked to use these guidelines when they began to write in the sessions to follow. Since they would meet the teacher (the researcher) only once a week for three hours in the language laboratory they were made aware of how online tutoring would be provided by the teacher. They were also asked to maintain a daily learning log. The introductory session involved one writing task: a personal narrative of about 150 words with a generous time allowance of one hour. They were given a separate file to keep their papers (drafts) to make them readily available to work on later.

Stage 2: Use of scoring guide
The scoring guide used for assessing writing was based on the revised scale for the British Council's ELTS test cited in Hughes (1989: 87-88) for testing writing.

In session 2 the 'marked' compositions (the personal narrative written in session1) were returned to them. This marking done by the researcher only indicated spelling errors, grammatical errors and wrong selection of words by means of underlining. No mark or grade was awarded. Students were asked to correct the errors. They were then asked to exchange their corrected/improved compositions with their neighbours and other student-writers in class.

After having prepared the students in this manner, a short presentation was made on the scoring guide and its use. This was to make them aware of different aspects of a written text through criteria specified in the guide. A set of three sample essays on a given task were shown on the screen. One of these was selected for scoring by them. Students were asked to grade the displayed essay on a nine-point scale using the scoring criteria. Helping them get this meta-perspective was the first stage in preparing them to engage in self-assessment and peer assessment in the later sessions.

The session ended with a phase of self-reflection for which three questions were given:

- What was the purpose of the session?
- What have you learned?
- How can you apply it?

A glance through these reports was quite a heartening experience as it seemed the message had been put across in so short a time. One of the students wrote, 'Today's class has been a sort of an eye-opener for me. I now understand the demands of a given task. The scoring criteria are like a checklist for me to evaluate my own writing and look for weaknesses in it and learn how to improve upon these weaknesses.'

Stage 3: Online tutoring
As noted earlier, the class sessions were supplemented by online tutoring. Inputs, tasks and instructor's feedback were given through group email. The input was mainly in the form of self-explanatory e-material on grammar, vocabulary, idioms and phrases to build linguistic competence. Students were given short writing tasks to be done in their free time and submitted for feedback but not grading. Such low stakes writing tasks were posted every day to ensure that they wrote daily.

Stage 4: Whole class to one feedback and revision
This stage was allocated three sessions of three hours each spread over three weeks for an essay. The type of text used here was the opinion essay. A short presentation on the features of an opinion essay was given initially. The class was

then divided into small groups of six to seven students each. Each group was given an opinion essay to write in not less than 250 words. One hour was allotted for this. Next, each group's essay was displayed on the projector in turn, and feedback elicited from the other groups. Selected items from the observations and suggestions given as feedback were incorporated using the track change device of MS Word. The whole class participated in this exercise. The teacher also gave feedback on some important issues overlooked by the students. The same process was repeated in the next two sessions – beginning with the revised draft of the previous session.

Each group produced another two revised drafts of the same essay. After the third session a post task was given. Each student working individually wrote an opinion essay on a new topic. This essay was formally evaluated by the teacher. The same method was adopted for the other genres – narrative, expository, argumentative, etc.

Findings

The study revealed that structured peer collaboration was successful both in facilitating students' revision skills and in helping them in a whole class discussion. Many positive learning experiences were noted in the study related to texts, genres, lexico-grammatical features, meta-discourse and overall enjoyment. Use of effective scoring guides helped them internalize the assessment criteria and understand the demands, constraints and parameters of a specific task. They learned more about writing and revision by reading each other's drafts critically, and their awareness of what makes writing successful and effective was significantly enhanced. Peer correction succeeded in removing nearly 80% of errors in a reviewed draft. These included changes in meeting task requirements, coherence, overall clarity of idea in a sentence, the forms of citation used and their relevance. The fact that most of the errors were removed by peers speaks volume of the efficacy of the method used. Table 1 given below shows some of the errors noticed by the peers.

Table 1: Errors of students observed in the first and second drafts

Type of error	Examples
Singular/Plural	No peoples welcome his plan. Many problem… Childrens do not pay attention.
Spelling	Payed, gudget, facilityes, misile, mechine, acommodation, sauround, greatful
Vocabulary	TV effected the health of schoolboy. My father was death so I could not joined college. My carrier was ruined.
Auxiliary	Ancient people is doing difficult thing and got successful. This improvement in computer technology are helping us.

Articles	She was in hurry. Boys went to the school.
Pronouns	Boys bring his home work. Everyone must meet her old friends.
Tense	Once there lived a king in Ujjain whose name is Vikramaditya. Many people told me that Internet creates many problem.
Subject-verb agreement	Engineer make sonography. Electrical designs is made more convenient. She understand your point.
Referencing	Sunil and Priya are my classmates. I share my secrets with her.
Voice	She is been informed.

Corrective feedback was well received by students using the track change function of a word processor in whole class discussion. Assigning students to mixed ability groups was found beneficial as it gave them more opportunities for collaboration. They could get over their initial inhibition of giving and seeking feedback.

The major outcome of this study was the students' recognition of themselves as having significant competencies as opposed to their initial self-perception as language learners with problems. The impact of increased clarity regarding evaluation criteria on their writing was visible. Their understanding of the advantages of multi-drafting tasks and improved writing skills were reflected in the end-semester examination and graded writing assignments.

Conclusion

Large classes are a reality. This method may in fact turn out to be beneficial to large classes. Whole class discussion and the editing of a sample of monitored writing allow students to practise the skills of evaluation while maximizing their understanding of the needs of both readers and writers. Besides providing time for students, this provides the teacher with a battery of strategies to utilize in the classroom. Unless students become the fulcrum, teachers will not be able to achieve much. Training them in self- and mutual correction should be seen as an essential part of teaching how to write.

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Contributors

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Foreword

Michael Connolly has been Assistant Director English Partnerships for the British Council in India since September 2013. Michael began his career in ELT in 1998 in Japan, working as a language assistant in local high schools. He has since worked in a variety of teaching, teacher training and academic management roles in Spain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories and in India since 2011. As Assistant Director English Partnerships India, Michael is responsible for the strategic direction, leadership and management of the English Partnerships project which since 2007 has reached more than 840,000 English teachers in twelve Indian states, working directly with over 8,000 Teacher Educators selected and trained by the British Council. Michael has Cambridge CELTA and DELTA qualifications in English language teaching as well as a BA and an MA from the University of Leeds in the UK.

Introduction

Paul Gunashekar has been teaching English, training teachers of English and developing instructional materials for language teaching for over forty years. He is a Professor in the Department of Materials Development, Testing and Evaluation, and Dean, Publications at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. He has authored, co-authored and edited over two hundred ELT textbooks, workbooks, supplementary readers and reading cards. He specializes in course design, teacher development and English for Specific Purposes. He edits the EFLU research journal *Languaging*, and is the Indian English consultant to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*.

Preface

George Pickering is a coach, trainer and consultant, who has delivered talks and consultancies in over 60 different countries for the British Council and other organisations. He is the academic director of the English UK Diploma in English Language Teaching Management and a tutor on the International Diploma in Language Teaching Management. He is an inspector of language schools for the British Council in the UK (Accreditation UK). George was the co-ordinator of the IATEFL Leadership & Management Special Interest Group for many years and is currently the SIG representative on the IATEFL Board of Directors. He has degrees in Philosophy & Politics and Psychology & Anthropology, a PGCE and a Masters in Second Language Learning & Teaching.

Overview

Simon Borg has been involved in ELT for over 25 years. After 15 years at the University of Leeds, where he was a Professor of TESOL, he now works full-time as an ELT consultant and specializes in teacher development, teacher research, and research methods. Full details of his work are available at http://simon-borg.co.uk.

Rama Mathew is Professor of Education in Delhi University, Delhi. Previously she taught at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad where she worked on language teacher education and assessment for more than twenty years. She has co-ordinated several ELT projects. Her current interests include teaching English to young learners, teacher education and proficiency assessment.

Julian Edge has been involved in TESOL and teacher education since 1969, living and working in Germany, Egypt, Singapore, Turkey and Australia. He has also held a number of university posts in Britain, from which he has travelled and taught widely. His research and publication interests have been increasingly committed to issues of continuing personal and professional development, along with a growing engagement with the sociopolitical implications of the spread of English. *The Reflexive Teacher Educator in TESOL: Roots and Wings* (Routledge 2011) explores the lessons learnt.

Steve Mann (Associate Professor) joined the Centre for Applied Linguistics at University of Warwick in 2007. He previously lectured at both Aston University and University of Birmingham. He has experience in Hong Kong, Japan and Europe in both English language teaching and teacher development. His most recent publications deal with the status of reflective practice, reflexive approaches to qualitative interviewing and the development of context-appropriate materials. Steve supervises a research group of PhD students who are investigating teachers' education and development.

Theme 1

Andy Keedwell is a Senior Training Consultant at British Council, India. He previously worked for British Council Afghanistan, where a significant part of his work involved support for the English for Security and Defence project which provides the delivery of English to Afghan military personnel. He has also worked in various capacities in South Caucasus, the Middle East and East Africa.

Sayed Najeem is Senior Teacher at British Council Afghanistan. His work includes support for the English for Security and Defence project, in which role he regularly observes teachers and provides feedback, and co-trains on sessions for less experienced teachers. He was previously an IELTS teacher for the project and has delivered teaching and training for the air force.

Arindam Sengupta teaches ESL at Hare School, Kolkata. A teacher-trainer, facilitator and presenter at various international conferences and workshops, he was involved with the Project English (British Council) from 2003–11 and worked as a state-level resource person. He is an alumnus of the Texas Intensive English Program of the US State Department (2010) and RELO's various online scholarship programmes.

Santosh Mahapatra is a faculty member in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, BITS Pilani (Hyderabad Campus). His research interests include language assessment, teacher education, mixed methods research and technology-enhanced learning. He has presented and published papers in these areas of applied linguistics.

Shefali Kulkarni works with the British Council in South India and has worked in the field of education for more than 15 years. She is interested in inclusive education, teacher development and learner autonomy. In her free time, Shefali likes to travel and read.

Allwyn D'Costa works for the British Council as a teacher trainer, corporate trainer, test developer and as an examiner. He is particularly interested in teacher training and testing. In his free time he enjoys reading and travelling.

Farhan Azim works as the Deputy Head of Research, Monitoring and Evaluation at EIA, Bangladesh. He completed his MA in Educational Assessment from the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London as a Commonwealth Scholar. He also has an MEd from IER, University of Dhaka.

Mir Md. Saifur Rahman works as the Deputy Head of Teacher Training and Support at EIA, Bangladesh. He has an MA in ELT from Presidency University, Dhaka and an MA in English Literature from the University of Dhaka.

Ravinarayan Chakrakodi works at the Regional Institute of English South India, Bangalore. He has done his MA (TESOL), with distinction, from Lancaster University, UK. He is involved in pre- and in-service teacher education programmes and is interested in second language acquisition theories, materials production and testing. He has published articles in many peer-reviewed journals and also chapters in edited books.

Theme 2

Padmini Boruah, PhD is Associate Professor in the department of ELT, Gauhati University, Assam, India. Her academic interests lie in teacher development, methodology and materials development. She is also interested in participating in research that tries to understand teacher and learner perspectives on the learning of English. Besides this, Padmini enjoys writing poetry, travelling and meeting people.

K. Padmini Shankar is an Associate Professor in the Dept. of ESL Studies, School of ELE in the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. She teaches on the MA TESL programme and offers research guidance to PhD students. Her research interests include: classroom-based research, teacher development, psychology for language learning, and teaching and assessing young learners.

Lina Mukhopadhyay teaches at the Department of Materials Development, Testing and Evaluation, EFL University, Hyderabad, India. She researches in SLA, bilingual education, language assessment, literacy and academic writing.

Mohialdeen Alotumi is a PhD scholar at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. His Masters was in TESOL from Murray State University, KY, USA.

Elaine Boyd is Senior Academic – English Language Testing and Assessment at Trinity College London responsible for product research, special projects and the spoken learner corpus project with Lancaster University. She has over 35 years' experience in English language teaching, assessment and test development and training. She is also the author of several coursebooks for both young and adult learners.

Kuheli Mukherjee, MA TESOL Teacher Education (University of Leeds), is a teacher, teacher educator, syllabus designer, material developer and reviewer. A winner of the prestigious Hornby long-term scholarship in the UK, she is currently a member of the state resource group for teacher education in West Bengal. She has contributed to international publications on ELT and presented papers in national and international conferences.

Pranjana Kalita Nath is a Doctoral Fellow (Ugc-Jrf) in the Department of English Language Teaching, Gauhati University, Assam, India.

Sruti Akula is a research scholar at The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad working in the area of English Language Education. She did her MPhil (ELE) and PGDTE from EFLU. Her areas of interest are academic reading and writing, second language assessment and second language acquisition. She is working as a teaching assistant at EFL University.

Susmita Pani was a Reader at the Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, India where she taught on the MA (ELT) course and research programmes. Earlier, she worked as a teacher educator at the English Language Teaching Institute, Odisha. She has been a part of several teacher development and textbook writing projects. Currently, she is associated as a teacher educator with Access, a global, American project to help disadvantaged learners.

Shree Deepa teaches at the Centre for English Language Studies, University of Hyderabad. She was awarded a PhD in English in 2014. She has taught proficiency

courses in English for 15 years at various levels including kindergarten. She is currently interested in the study of including blind-visually-impaired students into mainstream education and improving techniques of teaching English at the tertiary level. She is more of a classroom practitioner than a theorist.

Alice Udosen teaches English methodology to teacher trainees in the Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Uyo, Nigeria.

Wisdom Jude teaches English methodology to teacher trainees in the College of Education, Afaha Nsit, Nigeria.

Joy Townsend, Co-founder, Director and CEO of Destiny Education, travels extensively across India conducting training workshops for teachers. She works with aspiring schools, evaluating, planning and facilitating their transformation. Joy is instrumental in writing pre-school and primary curricula, as well as designing teaching aids to enable interactive, multi-sensory learning. She has authored Fab Phonics, a multi-level phonics curriculum.

Sanjay Arora is working as Associate Professor of English in Central University of Rajasthan, Kishangarh (Rajasthan). His areas of interest are English Language Teaching and Second Language Pedagogy. He is the National President of English Language Teachers' Association of India (ELTAI). He has also been the recipient of a Post Doctoral Fellowship from UGC and has been a trainer.

Adam Scott has nine years' experience teaching English, and is a teacher and teacher-researcher at St Giles College, Brighton (UK). He specialises in undertaking classroom research, applying published research findings in practice, and course development. Adam has a Cambridge DELTA and is part of the inaugural Cambridge/EnglishUK Action Research Scheme, developing his skills investigating the uses of synthetic phonics in ELT.

Geetika Saluja, MSc Med, is currently pursuing a doctoral thesis on the benefits of co-operative learning in the Indian classroom. She was instrumental in getting ISA certification for St. Kabir School, Ahmedabad where she work as Educational Co-ordinator. She has been awarded commendation for Action Research for Global Teachers Accreditation (GTA), and is a member of International Association for the Study of Co-operation in Education (IASCE). Her interests include education in sustainable development, incorporating global dimension in classroom and travel.

Theme 3

Dawn Bikowski directs the English Language Improvement Program (ELIP) in the Linguistics Department at Ohio University. With a PhD in Instructional Technology and an MA in Linguistics, she enjoys researching how best to use technology to help students succeed in higher education and professionally. Her teaching experience includes ESL/EFL contexts as well as international teacher training and curriculum development.

Nicky Hockly is Director of Pedagogy of The Consultants-E, an award-winning online training and development organisation. She is a teacher, trainer and international plenary speaker, and has co-written several award-winning methodology books on technologies in ELT. Her most recent book is *Going Mobile* (2014). She lives in Barcelona and is a technophobe turned technophile.

Meera Srinivas teaches at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. She has been teaching English, training teachers of English and developing materials for English language teaching for over twenty years. She has authored several school-level English teaching books. Her areas of academic interest include curriculum and syllabus design, materials development, ESP course design and teacher education.

Bose Vasudevan is currently working with the Institute of Language Teaching, Jamnagar, as an associate professor in ELT. He has a PhD in ELT from Sardar Patel University and a Post Graduate Diploma in ELT from English and Foreign Language University. Dr Bose is associated with British Council India and an active member of ELTAI and IATEFL.

G. Priyank Varma is currently pursuing his PhD at the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Hyderabad, India. His doctoral thesis investigates the understanding of concrete and abstract concepts by visually impaired students. His research interests include visual impairment, and materials development and language teaching to young learners.

Madhavi Gayathri Raman is Assistant Professor at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. Her interests include materials design, curriculum development, specific language impairment and dyslexia in an ESL context. She has authored articles on the assessment of dyslexia, school-level English textbooks, language playbooks and a book chapter on the use of plays to teach language.

Ramraj M Is a PhD Research Scholar in EFL-University, Hyderabad. He is interested in vocabulary acquisition and inclusive education.

Raashid Nehal is an Associate at the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University and currently serving as Director, AMU Centre, Kishanganj. He received his PhD in ELT from AMU and PGDTE from EFLU and completed UGC, Hornby Alumni and RELO projects on 'Academic Writing', 'Training Needs Analysis', 'Materials Adaptation' and 'Kindle Assessment in India'.

Akhil Kumar Jha holds an academic position at Indian Institute of Technology, Indore. He has a PhD in ELT. His current research interest is teaching English to under-privileged engineering students.