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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“English is the common tongue of our global village. Whether you live and work in an English speaking country, or need English for travel and fun, English is the passport to success and a deeper understanding of our quickly changing world.”

- **Kenneth Beare**, About.com Guide to ESL

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VIDEO: Old English: Languages of the World: Introductory Overviews

Alexander Arguelles presents a series of videos to provide introductory overviews of the languages of the world. Working diachronically through various language families in turn, he demonstrates how to identify each language, translates a text sample to show how it works, and discusses its genetic affiliation and cultural context. For further information about the series, please refer to <http://www.foreignlanguageexpertise.com>.

Watch the video at <http://eltweekly.com/more/2009/07/19/eltweekly-issue-26-video-old-english-languages-of-the-world-introductory-overviews/>

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RESEARCH PAPER: Relevance of a Digital Language Laboratory to the Teaching and Testing of Listening and Speaking Skills

By **Atul Bansilal Patil**

Over the past thirty years, the evolution of technology with rapid developments has changed our workplace, schools, colleges and society. It is hard to believe that as late as the 1980's, the overhead projector was considered a progressive teaching tool. Every classroom was not equipped with 'the latest' tool. Today, not only are projectors standard in most classrooms, but in most colleges teachers can access computer laboratories. Only thirty years ago, we would have thought this as an impossible luxury. If we have seen these kinds of changes in the last three decades, what will the next three bring? How long will it be before every student has a laptop? Will every college have a wireless access as a standard across the campus? Along with changes in tools available for teachers, comes the challenge of learning how to integrate new technology into our teaching methods. Teachers of English have been so far unable to take the opportunities of existing and emerging technologies to a degree corresponding to their potential benefits. As educators, we must not only react to this change but be pro-active in order to prepare our students for the emerging knowledge based work-force and the challenges of a global economy. As teachers, we should believe that this requires the active use of new technology tools which can help to capture and sustain attention of a class. These also make teaching materials more engaging and effective. Use of effective audio-visual aids reduces monotony and helps teachers impart training with a learner-centric approach. This will ultimately, lead to collaborative learning which would motivate the learners to learn.

As technology advances, the role of the teachers to deliver and facilitate learning for their expectant 'techno savvy' students is to be in sync with existing and emerging technologies. Language teaching has utilized the technologies of the day from the slate to the paper and pencil, to tapes, to slides, to videos, etc. Beginning with the 1960s and the Grammar Translation method; technology-based teaching has gone through the audio-lingual movement; into emerging use of tape recorders, video tapes and up through the state-of-

the-art Digital Language Laboratory (DLL). The use of DLL facilitates the process of learning a language to a great extent.

History of Language Laboratories

The history of the language laboratory can be divided into five periods:

the period before it began: pre 1915,

the period of its establishment until 1958,

the developing period until the end of the 1960s,

the diminishing period until the end of the 1970s, and

the revival period that extends from the 1980s till today.

The origin of the language laboratory can be traced as far back as 1877, when Edison invented the tin foil phonograph. In the 1920s, radios were used for foreign language instruction. The practical use of language laboratories began in the 1950s, when tape recorders became popular for learning discreet linguistic units, which could be mastered through the mechanical process of repetitive drills. Studies by Keating, Lorge and Allen shed some light on certain aspects such as the relative merits of eagerness of pupils in a language laboratory class as opposed to a non-laboratory situation. Hutchinson and Lorge also cited cases of significant improvement with regard to audio-lingual skills. However, during the 1970s there was a rejection of language laboratories, since language acquisition theories changed towards communicative fluency rather than linguistic accuracy. In the 1980s a revival period began. Since then, language laboratories have been significantly improving and changing to aid new linguistic learning theories. The advent of the computer has led to laboratories having a digital base.

Capabilities of Digital Language Laboratory:

Traditional language laboratories have been supplemented by computer-assisted instruction and interactive media technologies. DLLs use computers to provide delivery of a wide range of material in digital format to the students. Through specialized programs, teachers can create their own exercises that fit individual classroom needs, add multimedia, and customize content. Computers also allow students to participate in national and international forums and networks, exchange ideas and information with other students and

the better monitoring of their own progress. DLLs allow for "real time" conversation with each student or groups of students, with a wide variety of potential feedback mechanisms to the student, teacher, or other students. At the same time, digital laboratories also perform the same functions that language laboratories in the past were able to carry out, such as allowing students to record their voices and allowing teachers to control student positions.

There are some common problems faced by teachers such as teaching the students who are from different backgrounds, constantly monitoring individuals in class, creating individual lesson plans for students, motivating students for improvement. DLL offers solutions to these problems by allowing:

- lesson planning and broadcasting to different groups
- customized lessons creation (audio, video)
- communication with students through audio/video and text chat individually or in groups
- teaching all students using interactive teaching tools
- monitoring students
- reviewing student performance & so on

Thus, today, DLL occupies a position within the whole range of audiovisual media which is rather different from what it was a few decades ago. (tum-te-te-tum drills). On the contrary, it is also true that the potential of DLL is not fully exploited so far in teaching and testing of listening (aural) and speaking (oral) skills.

Teaching of listening and speaking skills:

It is common and accepted knowledge that the dexterous learning of a language cannot be a non-interactive process. Over the years, it has been noticed in various studies conducted, that languages are most easily adapted to when the learner understands basic phonetics and dialectics of a language through listening and speaking. Reading and writing undeniably play a pivotal role, but the greater contribution of learning through listening and speaking cannot be questioned. However, in the Indian education context, there is a neglect of listening and speaking skills. Traditionally, there has been a focus on the development of reading and writing skills. The syllabus, right from class I, aims at reading and writing and, thus, fails to

cater to the communicative needs of learners by preventing learners from gaining adequate practice. The potential of DLL to make an impact on the skills of listening and speaking is vast.

"Sound brings language to life and life to language".

Listening is the basis of language learning and excellence in listening is an essential requirement for effective communication. Listening to the correct way a language is spoken and spoken in a way in which the listener acknowledges its correctness is paramount to the process of language learning. DLL offers a remarkable platform to practise and enhance listening skills. The audio assisted laboratory is a virtual mini-media unit with the hookup of a special tape recorder to the computer interactive audio providing multiple possibilities for teachers to teach. A printed screen comes alive with sound for the acquisition of listening skills. This highly sophisticated environment induces the student to focus on his ability to listen first, then to comprehend, and then to be able to utilize this comprehension in order to set up a rudimentary communication process. Later on, mimicking the speaker, or better still, mimicking the grammar of the speaker, the listener can easily attune himself to the flow of language. Interactive Videodisc programmes can provide excellent listening comprehension activities. Depending on the language level, students listen in order to pinpoint the main idea or just a segment, or they listen for specific facts. In any lesson, the learner can listen, repeat and record. This follows the pattern: Stimulus- Response- Feedback: a pattern advocated by structural methodologists.

Any audio clip can be sent across for the whole class or a particular group. Students can play, replay as often as necessary until they are satisfied that they have thoroughly understood it or, in the case of pronunciation drills, until they are able to approximate the model. A teacher, meanwhile, can serve as a monitor, listen to any student, correct pronunciation errors, answer questions and provide answer keys to exercises. Through such activities, a teacher can introduce students to phonetics, speech sounds, intonation, stress and rhythm. 'The Self-access, Self-study listening library' stored on the teacher's computer can easily be made available to students. It provides a student the facility to practise and assess his/her own performance.

Listening and understanding the target language is not sufficient. Speaking the language is the main aim of most language learners. To develop this productive skill, dialogues can be

effectively used. Use of an interactive audio programme allows students to create dialogues and to practise them with other students. Use of videos also plays an important role. The videos can be controlled (stopped, paused and replayed) and they can be presented to a group of students, to individuals. It allows learners to see lip movements, facial expressions and body language at the same time as they hear stress, intonation and rhythm of the target language. DLL also allows students to practise with interactive exercises in word accent, pace, speech stress, intonation, improve their speech and reduce mother tongue influence through use of phonetic lessons, record his/her pronunciation and compare with the pre-recorded trainer pronunciation. The voices of many native speakers can be presented. They can present an invariable model for tasks involving repetition, for instance, in pronunciation correction, resolving difficulties in understanding spoken texts, and providing feedback in pattern drills. The teacher can also use the facility of voice recording which makes it possible to check learner's utterances, which allows a certain degree of objectiveness in testing and evaluation to be achieved. The recorded utterances are automatically saved and are available for later use; for instance, for subsequent evaluation by external judges.

Testing of listening and speaking skills:

From a practical perspective, testing is a critical area in language education, as results of testing often influence the future of learners, the professional evaluation of instructors and the direction of curriculum design. 'How much' of the skill has been acquired by a learner needs to be tested. A test is a procedure for measuring ability, knowledge or performance. One of the main tasks of any educational institution and its teachers is to measure the growth of language acquisition and learning with reference to particular students and / or the whole group. The obvious response is through valid, reliable tests that can show how a learner's language has developed through a sequence of language study. DLL offers tools to carry out different assignments in testing and finally creating exploratory and dynamic learning environments. With the help of various features of DLL a teacher can:

- create questions and reach out to all students
- assign the time for the test
- create 6-8 types of questions in a single exam sheet
- create the answer key, it will automatically evaluate
- create customized materials for the classroom with the help of Authoring programmes.

Summative or formative evaluations can be done through DLL. One can also test before a programme commences. Computer Based Tests (CBTs) are used to determine initial levels of proficiency of learners who wish to enrol for a particular course in order to be able to assign them to elementary, intermediate or advanced level groups. These kind of tests help avoid time-consuming administrative procedures, scoring methods and reporting policies. Automation of assessment in DLL allows colleges to accurately assess and place new students in minutes and save time. A database is created which allows colleges to conduct research necessary in defining cut-off scores, an important process to ensure that students are placed at their most appropriate level. Statistical reports can easily be generated from the database.

To check the learners' linguistic competence in listening, the test may include auditory identification and sound discrimination, e.g. identification of sounds, discrimination of foreign sounds, discrimination of English sounds, implicit discrimination, intonation, stress and accent. Apart from this, one can also use songs in the laboratory. A very simple exercise is to do a gap-fill. Choose a song and provide the students with a worksheet with the lyrics, with some words omitted. The students then listen to the song and try to fill in the missing words. The advantage of using a language laboratory is that the students can work at their own speed. It also allows a teacher to provide different exercises for different levels in the class. For instance, a worksheet with more words missing for higher level students can be designed. A little thought, however, does need to go into the choice of the song, the words to be deleted and the tasks to be done before and after. Time limit also needs to be set. This becomes a productive and enjoyable activity for the students.

Testing speaking often poses a peculiar challenge for teachers. The most common approach to rating students' speaking proficiency is through an interview format rated according to predetermined criteria. Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) can easily be conducted in DLL individually or in the form of a group discussion. A teacher is an authorised person to start or to end a GD at anytime. Control over students can also be maintained. A teacher can add multiple students in the discussion, control the group real time, disconnect an unwanted speaker, can pause or resume a student at any time.

In order to check linguistic competence in speaking, students can be instructed to listen to an audio speech and record the same in the students' voice. Both the voices then can be compared by the computer. To check communicative competence in speaking, the function of video conferencing can be used- students could be asked to create something and get it

recorded in the disk for further discussion. For instance, one student takes the role of a Personal Manager, and another student pretends to be a job applicant. The manager conducts the interview. Every thing is recorded with a camera, and the recording is shown to the whole class later, which can proceed with a discussion about the language used. We can go even further by discussing the non-verbal communication caught by the camera. This should be interesting to the students. The teacher may analyse their recordings and look for their strengths and weaknesses with respect to accuracy, fluency, interactions, etc.

DLL having access to the internet opens up new opportunities for language learning and testing, with the World Wide Web providing access to easy opportunities to create, present or reuse existing content. The simplicity of blogging and the popularity of sites like YouTube / TeacherTube have resulted in a huge growth in user-generated content, a boon for language teachers looking for additional materials for learners such as practice exercises, tutorials, games, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, manuals, texts, videos, images, pod casts, news, documents, comics and so on. With the help of internet, the teacher can not only publish and deliver interactive, multimedia activities but can also offer a tool for mobile teaching and testing. Students from any part of the world can, therefore, network their home computers to the school computers and become citizens of a digital global village.

This concludes my overview of how a digital language laboratory can be used, not as a substitute for a teacher, but as a supporting aid. Availability of the tool is one thing: effective utilization of it is another. The role of the digital language laboratories will only develop with the progress of research and training because it is not the technology but the pedagogical use of technology that determines the effectiveness of the digital language laboratory.

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RESEARCH PAPER: Importance of English and CAI on outsourcing

By **Dr. N.K. Mehta¹ & Dr. D. Mehta²**

Abstract

English is the window to the world. It has been regarded as the international language. With the advent of globalization and privatization the world has turned into a "global village". Modern technology has also helped to give momentum to the activities related to trade and business. E-business is result of all these latest trends and changes. In order to keep the pace with the growing requirements of the changing world and to make the presence felt at the international platform, it is necessary to provide due importance to English language. It is a well-known fact that Internet has changed the routine affairs of our life. Call centres and consumer care centres are the orders of our present day life. Undoubtedly, in outsourcing sector, English as a language is generating vast job opportunities to our millions of young men and women. The impact of English language cannot be ignored or overlooked. The present paper is an attempt to discuss the importance of English and CAI on outsourcing.

Key Words: E-business, BPO, Call-Centres, CAI, etc.

Rationale of the Paper

The paper is based on theoretical study and explores:

- (a) The Impact of English on Outsourcing.
- (b) The Role and Importance of English in Outsourcing.
- (c) The Computer Assisted Instruction in Training of Call -Centres employees.

Introduction

English is the window to the world. It has been regarded as the international language. With the advent of globalization and privatization the world has turned into a "global village". Modern technology has also helped to give momentum to the activities related to trade and

business. E-business is result of all these latest trends and changes. In order to keep the pace with the growing requirements of the changing world and to make the presence felt at the international platform, it is necessary to provide due importance to English language. It is a well-known fact that Internet has changed the routine affairs of our lives. Call centres and consumer care centres are the orders of our present day life.

Undoubtedly, in outsourcing sector, English as a language is generating vast job opportunities to our millions of young men and women. English dominates the world of business. In India, English is the language of business and administration.

India is fast opening up to the world economy. After the introduction of New Economic Policy most sectors are now open to foreign investment. Companies from all parts of the world are setting up their offices/branches and business outsourcing centres here and tying up with Indian companies.

The most ambitious young men and women are searching for lucrative jobs in the outsourcing sector. And the first and foremost condition of success of these areas is ability to communicate effectively in English language. The impact of English language cannot be ignored and if we further specify the fact that in India its impact is multifarious.

Due to the century long British colonial rule and the present education system being based on British standards, Indians are proficient in the English language. English is also serving as the Business language of India. Moreover, all official documents and reports including the National Budget are prepared in English. India alone produces two million English speaking college graduates and 300,000 postgraduates annually. Globalization is changing the way of living and thinking. Even it is changing the way of English language is spoken and written.

Review of Literature

A large number of electronic gadgets had been used to master a foreign or second language. Johnston (1987, p. 29) explains that "the term audio refers to the electronic transmission of aural material, in both live and recorded forms. The audio medium is utilized in a number of technologies." According to Johnston, "television and computers emerged as the alluring educational media" (Johnston, p. 30). There is relatively little information available on language teaching through CAI, though there is starting to be more and more (Doshisha Daigaku Johoshori Kyodo Kenkyu Team, 1992; Kitao, S. K., 1992; Kitao, K., 1993a). The

study group of English CAI published Hajimete no CAI: Yoriyoi eigo kyoiku o motomete [Introduction to CAI: Seeking Better English Education] (Edasawa et. al., 1992).

The Impact of English on Outsourcing

One of the most notable features of globalization has been the outsourcing of services to countries with cheaper labour costs. Global English has helped to accelerate this fact and given India a competitive edge over other developing countries. As outsourcing knows no boundaries and it is expanding like anything then scope of English language is also getting wider and wider. The impact of English on outsourcing can be witnessed in following areas:

- For generating vast job opportunities in BPO sector.
- For smooth working of the system
- For translation related assignments.
- For promoting business activities at international level.
- For studying typical cases pertaining to business
- For better utilization of manpower
- For official correspondence and documentation.
- For establishing better communication at different levels
- For using latest available technologies
- For advertisement campaigns
- For promoting a brand
- For materializing negotiations

The nature of most of the work that is outsourced is considered call centres, document writing, and even software programming are all occupations that require native level English fluency. Outsourcing really exhibits a competitive advantage for the English speaking nations of the developed world. But India certainly enjoys the benefits of a vast pool of skilled persons who are proficient and well versed in English language.

As it has been stated earlier that India produces the largest number of graduates every year and most of these graduates have knowledge of English language. If we talk in the context of India then language is one of those factors that attract MNCs to contract out their business operations to Indian BPOs and IT companies. Mastery over quantitative concepts coupled

with English proficiency enables India one of the hottest spots of the BPO world. It has also enabled the country like India to take advantage of the current international demand for IT.

The world of outsourcing has also given boost to advertising industry and translation activities. In case if any product intends to make its market at international level then English plays a major role to establish communication with its buyers.

Importance of English

English is the most suitable and a fit media due to its vast reach and usage. In translation related activities English becomes the source language, as it is widely understood and has an easy mechanism. Therefore, translators who are engaged in outsourcing prefer English as a core language.

- To keep the importance of English alive following are the requirements for the growth of English language in outsourcing:
- To promote the use of English in the society.
- To encourage our young students to learn English as an international language.
- To provide opportunities to young speakers of English at large gathering.
- To publish more reading materials in English and develop reading habits.
- To conduct regular seminars, workshops and meetings.
- To provide scholarship in learning English at advance level.
- To conduct research work and establish language labs.
- To conduct regular training programmes for the teachers of English so that they can apply latest technologies and trends in English languages teaching.
- To open call or consumer service training centres.

Matter of fact, in all the existing call/voice centres English is a must language. If one has good communication skills then one can become a "wonder boy or girl" easily. But here "perfectness and accuracy" are the major components to aspire the success.

Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) in Training of Call -Centres Operators.

Call centre operators being able to speak with an intelligible accent over the phone. Getting pronunciation right - UK English when speaking to people in the UK and North American English when speaking to Americans or Canadians - is considered very important. Most complaints about call centres focus on being understood by the operator and not being able

to understand his/her reply. To overcome these problems there are many ways to use computers for English language teaching. First of all, teachers can use them to prepare for classes. They can use a word processing program to write teaching materials and tests. They can use dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc., available on the computer as resources to help them prepare materials. Computer networks are also useful for getting teaching materials, exchanging them with other teachers, and getting new ideas or suggestions for handling particular problems. Students can get different types of input using a computer. Using multi-media materials, computers can display written text and use sounds, still pictures, and video. Students feel things are more real and more easily understood. Through simulation and other techniques, computers can present abstract things in a concrete and easily understood way. They also have access to various types of aids, including dictionaries, pictures, graphs of intonation, and voice recordings. Learning can be individualized using computers. Students can study materials related to their individual goals and what they need or are interested in, with the appropriate difficulty level and at their own pace. Computers can analyze the problems of each student, and the teacher can help individual students with their problems based on the analysis. Moreover, CAI is very helpful in organizing special classes to hone speaking and listening skills of call-centres employees. Use of language Lab may be one of the best options to gear up the speed of learning process.

Computer Assisted Language Laboratory (CALL)

CALL uses the computer to teach language. The language course materials are already fed into the computer and are displayed according to the features available in the system. Nowadays, there are also laboratories with computers with a connection to the Internet. These are called Web Assisted Language Laboratories (WALL).

Multimedia Hi-Tech Language Laboratory

There is a lot of software available on the market that can be used in the multimedia language laboratory, for example: Renet, Aristoclass, Hiclass, Globarina, Console OCL-908W, BBC Language Learning Software, Auralog: Tell Me More etc.

Advantages of Language Lab

a) Enables the employees to listen to model pronunciations or question; repeat/answer/record the same if required, listen to his own performance and compare the same with the model for self assessment which is the key to fast learning.

- b) Effective guidance and individual attention from the teacher .
- c) Empowers employees to work at their own pace and privacy.
- d) Helps employees to cognize the language in a veritable context.
- e) And briefly, it enables the employees to master the language with ease and flaw.

Conclusion

Above all English as a language appears to dominate the scene at international level meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences, programmes, conclaves etc. Whatever information or messages any organization desires to receive or send then it has to heavily rely upon English. Whereas the language laboratory offers broadcasting, television programmes, web-assisted materials and videotaped off-air recordings in the target language. In short, a call centre operator can get the experience of having interaction with native speakers through the laboratory. Hence, the language laboratory has become the need of the hour in any language learning process for communication. In assigning the various duties at different level effective and impressive communication are required and here English holds all the keys to open different channels of communication. When in the most parts of the world English relishes a unique place then in business related schemes and programmes English becomes subtle option to communicate with conviction.

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Dr. D. Mehta is a Reader in Faculty of Management Studies, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Business Management, Vikram University, Ujjain. He has more than 12 years of teaching and research experience. He is also Associate Editor in the prestigious Indian Journal of Accounting. He is providing research guidance to several students. He has authored several research papers /articles on Marketing, and other Management related themes. He is also UGC-NET qualified in Management and Ph.D. in Management. He has participated in young scientist congress.

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ARTICLE: EFL Teachers LinkedIn

By **Karenne Sylvester**

This article first appeared on How to Learn English (<http://kalinago.blogspot.com>)

Like everything else in life, you get back what you put in and LinkedIn is no exception to this rule.

LinkedIn is a social-networking site, in the way that Facebook, Twitter and Ning are, however, its community function is slightly different - its core objective lies in bringing together professionals.

Whether they are accountants, IT managers or CEOs they're all there on LinkedIn.

English Language Teachers, institute owners, publishers, authors, bloggers and e-learning site developers.

However, and actually, the thing I like best about this site is that unlike most other social-networking sites, on LinkedIn you know exactly who you're talking to and the profile you build also manages to serve as an online public CV (resumé) .

That may seem a little scary, especially if you're learning all this techie stuff with me step-by-step, but if you are looking to

- expand your clientele
- stretch into new fields of expertise
- state your availability for new projects or jobs
- or you just want to let the world know about your teaching abilities
- then it is an excellent space in which to do this in.

1. Building a good profile

Spend time filling in all the details about your life, work experience, abilities, qualities and aspirations.

Remember that you are not only listing what you can do but in a way, just like in an interview, you are selling yourself in advance.

Definitely put in the same amount of time you'd spend updating your CV if you were applying for a job next week - LinkedIn is searchable by Google and once you have a profile listed, it is this (if you have a vanity profile) that will most likely be on the first page whenever someone types in your name.

Karenne Sylvester is a certified TESOL trainer, working as a freelancer in Stuttgart, Germany and she specializes in teaching adult learners in the financial/ banking, energy, engineering and IT sectors.

She has lived and worked all over the world: from the Caribbean to the US, UK, Australia, Hong Kong and Ecuador.

She is the sole proprietor and webmaster of Kalinago English and author of SimplyConversations™, a pedagogically sound speaking skills system, designed to activate language learners' fluency.

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* ELTWeekly would like to thank Karenne Sylvester for contributing this article.

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ARTICLE: Teaching pre-school English

By **Alex Case**

Should my English teaching school be a pre-school school?

(Or should my pre-school be an English teaching school?)

You only have to look at the amount of new materials being launched by the major EFL publishers for the pre-school English teaching market (see, for example, references 1, 2 and 3) to see that 2 to 7 year olds is tipped as a growth market in the near future. This is hardly limited to English teaching, either, when amazon.com has 750 different educational DVDs and videos available for the under twos. So as someone in the English teaching industry, how should you feel about this wave of very small students descending upon an English language classroom near you? Should you dread toilet troubles in the classroom, jump on the bandwagon, change your teachers, change their training or dismiss the whole idea of teaching such students as a delusion resulting from an increasingly competitive market and increasingly competitive parents? Below I will examine the consequences of playschool and kindergarten age kids learning English in our schools for all the people involved: the teachers, parents, students, school managers, school owners etc. Even for those who are not directly touched by this trend, I believe there are things we can all learn from this change in the English teaching world.

Why are you here?

As a teacher who specialises very generally in 'outside contracts' I have come to have two seemingly diverse specialisations- classes in businesses and classes in kindergartens. That mixed experience makes me automatically want to look at a new kindergarten class in the same way as I would look at a new business class and do a 'needs analysis'. This is obviously not straight-forward for the under sevens, as any of the few kids who might have a present or future need for English are unlikely to be able to articulate it or even understand that need in any language. However, understanding why those pre-school children are learning

English is maybe the best starting point to being able to pick a syllabus and teaching methods suitable for this age range. Although we might have our own views on if and how such young children can learn English well and the children themselves will certainly have reasons why they will ask their parents to continue going to a class or refuse to go again, it is ultimately the parents who provide the impetus for trying a new language class and continue to pay for it every month.

Education mothers?

One common motivation for starting children in pre-school classes is that it will give them a head start in language learning and their academic careers more generally. There is a commonly held perception that the younger you start a language the easier it will be to learn, especially in terms of picking up listening skills and a native-like accent. This effect can certainly be seen when a family moves to an English speaking country and the children are quite happily mixing with their peers in English while the parents are still struggling with learning the alphabet or pronouncing their maid's name. Indeed, "there seems to be some agreement [by researchers] that there is a sensitive period for acquiring a second language. Children who start younger than 11-12 years of age, given advantageous learning circumstances such as plenty of input and interaction in an English environment are more likely to acquire English to native levels without an accent" {4} This academic data seems to have trickled down over the years to the general public, perhaps because it seems to match their own everyday experience. There are several major caveats to this data that seem to get little coverage outside the specialist press, though. One is a debate on whether these children are actually learning the language quicker than the parents in this situation. The fact that they learn enough to cope in their everyday life more quickly might just be a result of the limited amount of language they need, compared to an adult who needs to learn vocabulary and formality levels for many different social situations. More importantly for most EFL learners is the question of whether whatever language learning advantages young learners have can be reproduced outside of the circumstances of ex-pat kids, namely intensive exposure to the language they are learning and a real need to pick up the language to interactive socially with the people around them everyday. If that isn't possible, the question then becomes whether those circumstances can be reproduced outside the English speaking world. These questions will be dealt with below, but at this 'needs analysis' stage the important point to bear in mind is that some parents will expect their children to be able to pick the language up quickly because of their age, and will often want work on pronunciation and listening comprehension with a native-speaker. In my experience, the

reasons why parents pull their children out of pre-school English classes or do not sign up after a demonstration lesson is that they think the classes are too easy and therefore their children will not progress quickly enough. The fact that we have to match the parents' expectations or seek to change them if we want to even continue teaching those kids is one reason why the parents get first mention in this article.

The second major reason parents of pre-school age children state for coming to the schools I work for is for their children to learn to mix with other people. In Japan, children sometimes start English lessons before they have even started kindergarten or any other situation in which they mix with large groups of unknown people. One reason that parents choose language lessons for this first experience is that language is by definition a social and interactive skill and therefore suitable for a class where students will also learn to mix with others, share, wait their turn, use polite language etc. In Japan, a more specific social skill they say they want their children to pick up is to mix with foreigners without the nervousness that many adults and teenagers feel when faced with someone of a different culture and background. In my experience, there is also often an unspoken motivation connected to social mixing, in that working on language learning and using language learning materials at home, e.g. reading an English bedtime story or listing things in English as children pass them in the street, can help the interaction between parents and children at a time when people in many developed countries are losing the ability to interact without any clear short term benefit or goal. Again, if we want the parents to be happy we will need to provide training in social skills like saying thank you, as well as language they can recycle with their children in their daily lives or language learning materials at home.

The third main reason parents at our schools want their students to study our English lessons is for them to have fun. This must partly be because not having to drag their children to the school makes the parents' lives easier, but here in Japan this also reflects a cultural emphasis on children being as 'lively' and 'energetic' as possible while they are still young. Cultural, economic and other factors will affect the reasons why parents choose English as a subject and certain schools to learn it in, so in each situation schools and teachers will need to find out each specific group of parents' needs, wants and preconceptions if we want to match outsiders' ideas of success with our pre-school students with our own understanding of language learning at this age. How far these demands are compatible with what researchers and teachers think about teaching students English at these ages will be examined after we have looked at who else is likely to have strong opinions on this little boom.

Doing it for the kids?

Although the paying customers are the parents, the people who should benefit most from being taught English are obviously the students themselves. Why might they be dragging their parents to their English classes rather than the other way round? Unlike their parents they are not motivated in any way by long term future gain. To look at what does naturally motivate them, let's look at what 2 to 7 year olds are happy to do when left on their own without anyone telling them what to do. Left in a room with no toys or people, kids will happily do things like jump and skip around, open things up to see what is inside, count to themselves, sing to themselves, make up their own songs and nonsense words, shout loudly and bang things to make noise, draw shapes on the mist on the window, name everything they can see, mess things up and tidy them up again etc. Put more children into that room and they will race each other, tell each other what to do, organize make believe games etc. Put them in the room on their own with toys and they will talk to a teddy bear, make animal and transport noises, stack things up, take things apart, stage fights etc. Bring an adult into the classroom and the whole dynamic can change- they will compete for the teacher's attention, show them what they have been doing, perform a little dance etc.

One striking thing about the list of motivating things is that most of the items are obviously of benefit to the child's physical, intellectual and social development, even though that is certainly not the conscious reason why they do them. This gives us some hope, then, that what children are motivated by at this age is also what they need and the demands of the children and academic demands of the teachers should hopefully not need to clash.

We can also see that the range of things that children are motivated by and need for learning are much wider than just 'fun'. They can be motivated by praise, a natural love of learning, being right, love of music, playing with language, testing their physical coordination, organising things, the frisson of a moment of fear (e.g. ghost stories), stepping out of bounds and being naughty, storytelling, a sense of anticipation, a challenge at the right level, and real and simulated social interactions. An English class that gives the kids what they want will include as many as possible of the points above, for example by telling a story about scary animals where students guess what they are before they pop up from the page. We can also make sure that these stimuli continue outside of the classroom by, for example, putting stars on good work so the praise continues at home, or giving them vocabulary of things they see everyday so they can list things for themselves and their parents. Before we fit together parents' and children's' wants and needs with what we think they need to actually

learn a language, I'd like to look at two more 'stakeholders' in the move to teaching of younger and younger ages- groups that are often assumed to just meet other people's needs but can hopefully gain something too in a 'win/ win' set up for pre-school teaching of English.

In it for the money?

There are three major ways in which the under 7s are taught English here in Japan. One is being brought into an English 'conversation' school. Another is having English lessons in their regular kindergarten, either from their regular teacher or from someone coming in. The third is children learning English at home with videos, storybooks etc, often with their parents. For a publisher to provide more materials for this age group the advantages are clear in a rapidly expanding market. For the schools the possible advantages and disadvantages of getting involved are more mixed.

For the language school, the advantage of expanding your range to teach younger kids is that students who start young tend to remain students for a long time, often due to their positive feelings they get about studying English in fun classes. Another motivation can be praised at their primary or secondary school for their high level of English lessons due to their head start. The disadvantages for a language school starting to teach those age for the first time are that in order to teach them well the classroom, equipment, textbooks, teaching skills etc. will all have to be changed a lot from what might be useable with all other students from primary age to adult. You will need smaller tables and chairs, carpet or something else soft on the floor, nothing sticking out at head height, no other sharp corners, lockable cupboards, safe and easily-handled scissors, crayons rather than colouring pencils, easily-washable surfaces, plastic objects rather than flashcards, nothing that is dangerous if it is put in the mouth and preferably a good supply of suitable storybooks, colouring and crafts activities and songs. Despite all your best attempts at keeping them amused and out of danger, there still will be bumps and bruises, fights, screaming and tears, and all the staff in the school will need to have the ability to cope with these, not just the teachers. This can mean more training for everyone, or might even have to mean specifically employing people who are more qualified and/ or temperamentally suited to dealing with little people.

When we are looking at adding English to a school of small kids, training will also almost certainly be needed, this time in how to adapt their classroom routines for this particular subject and often language classes so that they can raise their own level of English to a levels where they can provide a good model for the children to pick up the language from. In my

experience non-native English speaking kindergarten teachers are generally unconfident about their own English and if they can teach the language as well as a native teacher. They are generally positive, however, about taking on English in terms of professional development and having a topic to teach that is often easier to structure classes for than things like teaching kids about nature. The selling point for the kindergarten in adding English lessons is that they can distinguish themselves from the other kindergartens by providing a subject that the others don't. Making this distinction clear often means having a native-speaker teacher come in, especially one that looks foreign! Although a lot depends of the skills of the teacher, having someone different who comes in and teaches English as well as instruction from their class teacher probably is useful to help very young learners make the distinction that L1 and English are two different languages used by different people in different situations, in the same way that bilingual children more quickly stop mixing their languages if each parent exclusively speaks only one of the two languages. It can also give the regular teacher a focus that they can help the kids prepare for the rest of the time, e.g. by teaching them questions they can ask the native speaker when they arrive.

What the kindergarten is likely to want to be able to show for their money is a rapid and obvious mastery of English by the kids, which often means an early focus on production such as drilling, craft work etc. that can be shown to the parents. Especially when a native speaker has been employed, the use of L1 is often frowned upon. This mainly means its use by the teacher, but even sometimes its use by the children!

What the teacher can learn

I have never met someone who set out to be a pre-school EFL teacher before they started their initial TEFL training. There are plenty of trained English teachers now doing mainly 2 to 7 year olds and more and more pre-school teachers who took on English as it was added to the curriculum, and there are also a surprisingly large number of people who have neither background but who still, willingly or unwillingly, work full or part time in this field. Apart from the obvious ability to earn a living by having experience in a growing field, what can and do all these kinds of teachers gain from teaching particularly this age group? In my own survey of native speaker teachers who have taught the 2 to 7 year old age group (see questions below) almost all the teachers thought it was useful to have teaching this age group on their CV and gave generally positive answers to most of the questions I asked. For example, most would be happy to send their own children to an extensive foreign language course similar to those they teach.

The most common positive adjective associated with teaching this age group was 'fun'. Others included 'varied', 'amusing', 'unpredictable', 'funny', 'refreshing' and 'spontaneous'. I would add 'touching', 'cute' and 'heart warming'. Intimately connected to the positive words, the most common negative adjective was 'tiring'. Others were 'disorganized', 'frustrating' ('because you can't see them progressing'), 'temperamental' and 'unpredictable' (again). Most teachers put teaching pre-school kids in the top half of their list of favourite classes, and many could think of at least one pre-school class they would put up near the top of their list. Most teachers said that the most important thing to make a particular school or class a pleasure to teach in was to have parents and school staff who were genuinely interested in foreign cultures, languages and education, rather than just using the English teacher as a babysitter. Other complaints were also mainly about things other than the children, such as the space and materials available. In fact, things like fights that might make a class of teenagers unmanageable seem a more natural part of the life of a three year old and so more easily forgivable. The worst moments of teaching this age group were generally about not feeling you were doing your job properly- such as being caught short of activities in a class with very short attention spans, students who seemed to be doing well being moved out of the class by their parents and losing control. The very best moments seem to combine a chance to step back and notice how cute the little monsters are and a feeling of a job well done, such as end of year performances of songs and plays or suddenly finding that silent or uncooperative classes and students have been listening and learning all along when they start to actively join in.

All the teachers questioned thought they had become a better teacher through teaching this age range and that they had developed skills, such as mastery of pacing, using your body, simplifying language, using warmers and coolers, accepting a silent period before production and responding to the moods of the students. This turned out to be an important question as although all the teachers were positive about teaching this age group few of them wanted them more often in the future, mainly because they thought that there was more they could learn from teaching other kinds of classes. In order to keep these kinds of experienced teachers in pre-school teaching, then, we need to make them feel like they are continuing to develop as teachers. Connected to this, the teachers' most and least rewarding moments are mainly connected to how much their students learn and how much they can see the importance of what they are teaching them. The latter is again connected to having a system where you can find out what the children, parents, other teachers, academic management, the children's future school and society in general want from the English

classes and so start each teaching day with a clear aim. The satisfaction to be had from actually teaching them that language well brings us finally to the theory of how these very young learners learn and should be taught.

To compare pre-school children very generally with the next age group up, 8 to 12 year olds, there are several clear differences in how and why they learn (there are obviously many differences between a 2 year old and a 5 year old, but in the interests of brevity I will make some sweeping statements about them, often by concentrating on the lower end of the age range). Firstly, younger students are “too young to feel any need for English. Their attitude is mainly affected by whether they like their teacher, the way English lessons are taught, their parents’ views, and what their friends feel about English” {5} In fact, “very young children lack the ability to manipulate and think about language in a conscious way” {4} and are often not even clear that English is a separate and equal language to their own.

As younger children tend to be “more concerned about themselves [than their peers] (2)” and have often spent more time with adults than children, how they feel about their classmates has less effect than for older classes, for better or worse, and the teacher will be a main focus of their attention during the lesson and the biggest influence on their willingness to come back. “Very young children say they like English because they like the teacher” {4} and in fact, “it may be that the teacher’s relationship with his/ her pupils is more important in the end than the particular teaching method used” {5}. That does not mean that a more technical teacher with less charisma will be less popular, though, as students at younger ages do not make any distinction between the fun they had and the personality of the teacher. “You are their children and therefore they will always associate the activities with you” {6}. Depending on the child, it might be easier or more difficult than with older children to spot these positive or negative feelings. Many younger children seem to need a silent period of absorbing the language before they are willing or ready to produce it in any way, but these students don’t seem to learn more slowly than those who shout everything back on the first day. As in many of these factors, you can draw a parallel with L1, where “children who do little overt imitation acquire language as fully and rapidly as those who imitate a lot” {2}

Perhaps surprisingly, many teachers say that students at younger ages show more variation in personality and learning styles than older kids. This means that some students will not join in an activity just because everyone else is enjoying it. It is possible, however, to make generalisations on activities that are successful at this age, although how the students respond to them will vary greatly depending on personality, mood, time of day etc. These activities

include action songs, simple mimes, stories, guessing and memory games, and coordination and other physical games. “The younger the pupils are, the more they want to move” {6} and again the children have the right instinct here as there is much evidence to suggest that combining physical activities with learning produces the best level of language retention at these ages. Something being popular does not always mean it is effective as a language learning tool, however, and crafts and colouring in are often more useful as coolers than as ways of teaching language unless they are prepared very carefully.

All the activities teachers do will need to be shorter than with older classes and more easily adaptable (or even abandoned) to deal with the short attention spans and quickly changing moods of these very young learners. It is often possible, however, to retry exactly the same language and/ or activity when they are more ready. In fact, you will need plenty of recycling both within the lesson and over the course as a week is a very long time for a 3 year old and a holiday can seem to wipe the slate clean. The language will just as quickly come back, especially if prompted by the same game in the same part of the lesson as the previous time. This is partly because for “unfamiliar tasks, unfamiliar contexts and unfamiliar adults can cause children anxiety and as a result they may perform well below their true ability” {4} but is also because even in L1 they produce language much more due to the context they are in than to the actual words they hear. This can be seen as a strength or a weakness, but means that students who can happily answer “What’s your name?” at the beginning of the class using the context will be totally lost if the same question is asked in other parts of the lesson or out on the street. They can also have the same problem transferring vocabulary they know from picture books to flashcards to posters and they will need to see the same language in many different contexts before it becomes generally useable rather than tied to one situation. There is again a parallel in L1, when “a child may first recognize the word ‘cat’ only in reference to the family pet [then] as the word is heard in more contexts- picture books, furry toys, someone else’s cat- the child recognizes and uses the word as a label for all these cats” {7}. With “What’s your name”, however, you might want to accept that they will usually be asked this question at the beginning of a conversation, accept their good strategy and move onto something else. The same could be true of their total focus on meaning rather than accuracy and so stubborn refusal to learn the 3rd person ‘s’ for years after it is first introduced.

Onto a winner?

So, do all these distinctive characteristics of the under sevens (and there are plenty more) add up to an advantage or disadvantage in learning English? You might have noticed a lack of quotes directly from research papers above, as well as many references to the theory of learning L1 rather than L2, both reflecting a lack of research on 3 year olds studying English for 45 minutes a week. Apart from the impressions of the teachers I interviewed, who are generally doubtful of how much progress then can make at this stage but positive enough to send our own kids to similar classes, we are often reduced to extrapolating from data on learning L1 or on slightly older EFL learners. Unfortunately, the general conclusion from this data is that “when learners receive only a few hours of instruction per week, learners who start later [...] often catch up with those who began earlier” {7} and that “at least in the early stages of second language development, older learners are more efficient than younger learners” {7} Students that start younger are, however, more likely to have a positive impression of the language and foreign language learning in general and are therefore more likely to consider continuing their studies. They are also likely to be more confident and bold in their language use and therefore more likely to use it in real life. In terms of getting an academic head start though, the evidence seems to point at them starting the violin or tennis at three instead of English. The older child’s advantages include being able to analyse the language consciously, more developed study skills and, often, more motivation. Their disadvantages can include shyness in speaking out and experimenting with stress and rhythm through music etc, and these parts of their pronunciation are, indeed, best developed sooner rather than later. In terms of individual sounds, though, the older student’s ability to think logically about mouth position etc. means they have a definite advantage here. This does actually match with everyday common sense when you think that young children can often not even pronounce the difficult sounds of their own language and how little effect correction has on, for example, their grammar in L1 (at least in the short term), but parents have often not put two and two together and will often expect this too to be dealt with from a very young age.

That’s all very well in theory

Is it possible, then, to combine what all the different groups above think about very young people learning English and create a model that makes everybody happy, especially when we are not even sure that it is useful for them to be learning the language at all? The first thing we can say is that there are many ideas that most of these groups have in common, perhaps more than for different age groups such as teenagers. For example, the researchers, teachers, parents and students all have no doubt at all about the use of fun and games at

these ages. There is also a very general agreement that they should use the time in class to learn other things as well as the language, e.g. the skill of mixing with other people. All the groups also seem happy to accept that children at this age should learn chunks of language such as fixed phrases rather than individual pieces of grammar. There are obviously differences and potential conflicts as well, though, such as different ideas on how quickly young children will be able to learn, especially marked if the number of contact hours is low. Another is that parents, school owners and others might want to see the instant production and correction of the language.

So, what can we do to please a parent who has what we believe to be unrealistic expectations of how much English their son or daughter should be learning in half an hour and how they should be learning it? For parents who certainly cannot move abroad or even send their kids to a full-time English medium pre-school, the only English related skills we can seem to offer them are better rhythm, intonation and confidence, and the chance that they will take a liking to learning languages. Can we convince them that their time and money wouldn't be better spent in different ways, e.g. by saving the money they would spend on pre-school English classes in a high interest account to pay for a more intensive course or send them abroad when they get older? In terms of 'amount of English learnt per pound' there may indeed be little point in sending your three year old to English class for 45 minutes a week. In fact, it might not even be better than nothing if the school system means there is the chance that they will have to abandon the lessons later on and so forget literally everything. One possible reaction to all this is to try to persuade the parents that a lack of progress from extensive classes is a reason to give them more hours rather than less, as the way that children learn by seeing the same language in many different contexts means that the relation between time spent and progress is exponential and each additional hour paid for should be better value than the last one. For students and parents who don't have much time or money, that could mean just an occasional 'summer school' or other intensive course to give a little boost and do things that there aren't usually time for like project work. Alternatively, it could mean having an English native speaker taking part in all the activities of a kindergarten for one whole day and so interact more naturally with the children.

The other selling point we can offer everyone is to see things like teaching the children how to use crayons before they can use the English colouring book not as a second best to teaching them more vocabulary but as an integral part of the course. Simply writing all the skills you are planning on developing in your classes on the syllabus and communicating this

to the parents is a great start to making everyone more motivated about the English classes. For example, renaming a pre-school class 'English and Art' could make a teacher think they are expanding their skills and adding something new to their CV, make parents happy that children are learning two things at once, and allow twice as many students to be best at something in the class. In a similar way, if we can give parents a list of exactly what language we want students to be able to passively understand at each stage and when we are expecting this to become production, we can hopefully persuade them to accept a silent period and generally have more patience when it comes to production. We can use the same tactic when trying to explain how and why L1 use in the classroom will be converted over the weeks, months and years into use of English. If we can then get everyone's feedback on what they think of the aims and how far they think the children have progressed in them we can really open the communication channels and help start a process that can achieve all that I set out to describe when I started writing this article: find out all the stakeholders' needs and preconceptions and try to match them with our own clear academic aims. Trying to point out our aims and theories on how to achieve them to groups such as school owners and parents should also help us make it clear to ourselves what holes there are in our knowledge, prompting us to research the things we don't know and start filling in the academic black hole that exists for extensive pre-school English classes. It could also help us have a more humble approach to the view of others. For example, when "no one has produced a continuum of the developmental stages of writing for children learning English as a foreign or second language, [and] there is no theoretical model to follow at this time" {8} we could do with as much input as we can get on conundrums such as very young learners on extensive courses needing reading and writing to make up for lack of day to day access to the language but often not yet being ready to learn those skills quickly and easily. Turning the teaching job and the whole industry into a process of identifying and solving problems with everyone involved should also help create an endlessly rewarding job that the most experienced and talented pre-school English teachers will be happy to stay in for much longer.

Pre-School English Teacher Teaching Satisfaction Questionnaire

What positive words do you associate with the experience of teaching pre-school children?
(Teaching English to pre-school children is...)

What negative words do you associate with the experience of teaching pre-school children?

Of all the types of classes you teach, what are the most rewarding for you?

If that is the top of your list, where would you put pre-school classes in a 'most rewarding' ranking? Top? Second? Near the top? In the middle? Near the bottom?

Compared to your other classes, does it take more or less time to prepare for pre-school?

Are you a better teacher due to teaching this age group? Why/ how?

Could any of the skills you have developed from teaching this age group be useful in other types of classes? Which skills? Which classes?

Will it be useful to have the fact that you have taught this age group on your CV in the future? Why?

What kinds of people are suited to/ unsuited to teaching this age group? Are you particularly suited to/ unsuited to teaching pre-school? Why?

What's the difference between a good pre-school job/ class/ school and a bad one?

In what ways are primary age children more rewarding to teach than KGs? In what ways less so?

What is your single best moment in teaching pre-school English? / What was the worst moment?

If you could choose between your own pre-school age child studying a foreign language once a week (e.g. French for a child in England) or using the time and money for something else, would you choose a language class?

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BOOK REVIEW

'The Universal Course in FRENCH' by Pawan Kumar

Reviewed by **Prof (Dr) Shefali Bakshi**

Mr Pawan Kumar, who is a teacher of French in Amity University, Lucknow Campus, since last three years is a student friendly book in which elementary or zero level learners can be well-versed with day-to-day French and its pronunciation. The book begins with a chapter on "Salutations" along with their English forms so as to make the learner involved in speaking the language right away. The second chapter concentrates on the French alphabets in their symbol form with the meaning in the Indian script. This chapter forms the base of the learner and so it is very important for the learner to completely understand and acquire the sounds correctly. The third chapter is on colloquial dialogues in a conversation form so that communicative activities like Role Play, Drilling Activity by repeating structures can be conducted in the classrooms. These, however, have Hindi translations for better pronunciation and usage. The author has constructed small chapters of lots of variety, thus motivating the learner to become fluent in the language. The best part is the last chapter, which is based on Lord Ram's story in French which evolves an integration of the Indian Culture in the French language. This inspires the learners to create their own short writings in French. At the grammar level, the author discusses 'Tenses' briefly and does a comparative study between the different tenses, which helps in story building.

The Author has taken examples from daily life so that a learner can grasp the basic knowledge in a simple way. The wonderful part of this book is that the pronunciation is given in the Hindi script; therefore any beginner can acquire the French language. Mr Pawan Kumar has written this book keeping in mind the growth of Engineering, Management, and other Institutes in smaller pockets of India. He has shown that it is not necessary to be proficient in English in order to acquire any other language. It is a boon to students who are studying in districts, towns and villages. So far, there was not a single book of such a kind for the vernacular medium.

Therefore the book has become very popular among the local learners of not only college but also school. This book can be subscribed in schools as today schools are also offering one foreign language to their students. The book is also being used in Amity University, Lucknow, Jaipur and Noida campuses, Lucknow University, and many other technical and management institutions where French has become an optional subject to be opted by the beginners. The author Mr.Pawan Kumar has made the languages very simple for first time for the Indian students

Prof (Dr) Shefali Bakshi is the Deputy Director at Amity School of Languages. She has done a Project on “A Study of Verbal Interaction in Waiting for Godot” for the M.A. degree and has completed her PhD thesis on “A Study of Verbal Interaction in the plays of Samuel Beckett” for the Degree of Ph.D. at University of Lucknow, India. She has conducted over 75 workshops on ELT in various parts of India for school teachers and principals.

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