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Social Significance in Language Study

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ABSTRACT

Sociolinguistics is basically a study of language as used in society. All are aware of the fact that language is a very significant feature of the culture of any society, as it gives indications as to how people behave. Society shapes and colours language, which in turn, functions as the spokesman of that society; society is represented by its language. Therefore it is language itself in its various personal, interpersonal and social forms and uses that is the prime concern of sociolinguistics. They study society to be better informed about the numerous linguistic choices that speakers have to make. It is in this backdrop that the writer will attempt to give her views in this paper.

Sociolinguistics:

In modern language studies, Sociolinguistics is a discipline in its own right, and one which is attracting an increasing extent of attention. Like other disciplines, it is based on both theoretical and empirical work-on both general principles and observed language behaviour. Researchers have found it very revealing to observe the two-way relationship between Language and Society. If

one were to ask what is the Pushto language, the most likely answer one would get from a layman is, it is language used by Pathans.

Thus sociolinguistics is closely related to both sociology and General Linguistics. It is also linked to such disciplines as geography and social anthropology. Here the writer will discuss the linkage between Sociolinguistics and Linguistics.

The word is founded by a prefix attached to the root part of the word - socio + linguistics. It is this latter part which is more important. Sociolinguistics is essentially a language study. To explain this point the author will take the help of an example, and give clues as to how a sociolinguist might deal with his linguistic data. Let it be assumed that he has come across the following sentences:

1. What d' you want love?
2. Can I help you?

Linguistic data:

Both are in the form of grammatical questions.

1 is a "wh" question.

Sentence 1 has an abbreviated form of "do". It also uses an additional word "love" to refer to you.

Sociolinguistic data:

If the word love was not used in sentence 1, it would be blunt and impolite.

It also appears to be more informal or colloquial in its style. Although sentence 1 asks for information, it functions as an offer of assistance just as much as sentence 2.

This data helps the Sociolinguist to make certain guesses about the situation, roles and possible class. He might come to the conclusion that the first sentence has

been used by a street market vendor, which would be a very informal situation. He might also guess that the second sentence has been said by a sales assistant in a more formal shopping context than the first.

However, the truth is that the same speaker might have used both examples, but in different situations. He might have had the ability to switch from one style to another, in order to ensure that his choice of language was appropriate to the situation.

A study of grammatical and lexical features is not enough: we need to be aware of the social purpose of language. What is appropriate in one situation may be inappropriate in another. A linguist studies all the systems within a language; within grammar he studies tenses, pronouns, comparison of adjectives and conditionals etc. he also studies phonology and the vocabulary of language. This knowledge may help him to produce grammatically correct sentences, but it does not teach him to make correct choices according to a situation. Hence the teacher of any foreign language needs to have both knowledge of the formal systems of that language, and an understanding of its social norms that govern appropriate choices from such systems. He needs to be aware of both *usage and use.*

The study of society helps one to understand its language. This understanding is not related to its structure or usage, but to its function or use its social use. Sociology is the scientific study of society. In order to appreciate why a certain individual makes a particular language choice, the sociolinguist has to study his sociological background. This is practically linked with social class, and varies from one society to another. In Pakistan, while society has its usual global class structure, it is specifically divided into the following social classes or groups.

Bureaucrats

Landowners

Businessman

Professional people

Peasant farmers/labourers

Sociology classifies members of a particular society in terms of their class, values, beliefs and views. The Sociolinguist is then able to study how language varies, and how different social situations encourage different language choices. Hence, the Sociolinguist attempts to explain language use by direct reference to observable social behaviour.

Language and Social Class

A native speaker will be able to estimate the relative social status of the following speakers on the basis of the linguistic evidence given here:

Speaker A	Speaker B
I don't it myself.	I did it myself.
He arn't here.	He isn't here
It was her what lost it.	It was she who lost it.

He will be able to guess that B was of higher social status than A, and would be certainly right. The reason why he can guess this is because of the varieties of language which have come to be called Social Class Dialects. There are grammatical differences between the speech of these two speakers, which give us clues about their social backgrounds. It is also probable that these differences will be accompanied by phonological differences   that is to say there are also social   class accents. The internal differentiation of human societies is reflected in their languages. Different social groups use different linguistic varieties, and as experienced members of a speech

community one learns to classify speakers accordingly. Parallels can be noted between the development of the social varieties and the development of regional varieties; in both cases barriers and distance appear to be relevant. Within the same class, group, institution and family, there are individual differences in language competence, use and preference.

It has been noticed that the greater the geographical distance between two dialects, the greater the variance. The development of social varieties can, perhaps, be explained in the same sort of way, that is, in terms of social barriers and social distance. The diffusion of a linguistic feature through a society may be halted by barriers of social class, age, race, religion or other factors. And social distance may have the same kind of effect as geographical distance: a linguistic innovation that begins amongst, say the highest social group will affect the lowest social group last, if at all. However, all language differences can not be explained in mechanical terms since attitudes to language clearly play an important role in preserving or removing dialect differences. Dialects are mainly based on geographical differences. Within one national language, it is possible to find several dialects. Take the case of those regional varieties of the north-east of Scotland   Buchan for example; or for that matter Urdu   The Urdu spoken by an ordinary Pakistani living in Karachi will be different from that of a Pakistani living in Peshawar. There will be differences in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, and the influence of the regional languages will be apparent. Therefore, a society and its language are closely related. In the same way, all the different classes which one finds within a society find their reflection in further language variety. Language is an expression of the thoughts, beliefs, aspirations and general education standards of its users. It is quite natural that different social groups will show slight differences in these matters, and that these differences will be reflected in the kind of language used. That also applies

to individual differences: different individuals use language differently and very personally. In fact, the same person may use the same language differently, according to his changing needs and varying occasions. Language being both social and personal, reflects social tastes as well as personal identity or individual personality.

This is particularly true of countries having a tightly hierarchical social structure, such as Britain. Apart from the regional standard accents such as Welsh, Scottish and Irish, geographical variation (dialect) is more a feature of the speech of the lower classes, whereas the speech of those higher up on the social scale often bears little trace of regional dialect. This is not the case in more socially 'open' societies, such as America, where the pronunciation of its people can clearly show their regional origins. A clear distinction needs to be made here between Dialect and Accent. Accent refers to nothing but differences in pronunciation, whereas dialect refers to differences in all aspects of language production, namely, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. Thus, in Britain many people who speak the standard English dialect, do so with regional accents. The most socially prestigious speech has tended to be that of the people who speak Standard English Dialects with a standard "regioness" accent. This accent is known as RP (Received Pronunciation). This is the accent which developed largely in the English public schools, and which was until recently required of all BBC announcers. It is known colloquially under various names such as 'Oxford English' and "BBC English", and is still the accent taught to non-native speakers learning British pronunciation.

R.P. is largely confined to England, although it also has prestige in the rest of the British Isles as well as in Australia, New-Zealand, South Africa and parts of Canada. As far as England is concerned, R.P is a non-localized accent, It is, however, not necessary to speak R.P. to speak standard English. Standard English can be spoken with any

regional accent, and in the vast majority of case, it normally is. Because language as a social phenomenon is closely tied up with the social structure and value systems of society, different dialects and accents are evaluated in different ways. Standard English, for example, has much more status and prestige than any other English dialect. It is a dialect, which is highly valued by many people, and certain economics, social and political benefits tend to accrue to those who speak and write it. So statusful are standard English and prestige accents, that they are widely considered to be 'correct' and beautiful. Other non standard non prestige varieties are often held to be wrong and ugly. Standard English, moreover, is frequently considered to be the English language; which inevitably leads to the view that other varieties of English are some kind of deviations due to laziness, ignorance or lack of intelligence, in this way millions of people who have English as their mother-tongue, are persuaded that they cannot speak English. The fact is that Standard English is only one variety among many, although a peculiarly important one. Linguistically speaking, it cannot even be legitimately considered better than other varieties. The scientific study of language; has convinced most scholars that all language and correspondingly, all dialects, are equally "good" as linguistic systems. All varieties of a language are structured, complex and rule-based, which are wholly adequate for the needs of their speakers. Therefore, it can be said that value judgements concerning the correctness and purity of linguistic varieties are social, rather than linguistic. There is nothing at all inherent in non-standard varieties which makes them inferior. Any apparent inferiority is due only to their association with speakers from under-privileged low-status groups. Linguists also pay attention to subjective attitudes towards language, as they are important in the study of language change, and can often help to explain why a dialect changes and when and how it does. A recent investigation into the speech of

New-York City has shown that since the Second World War, post vocalic/r/has been very much on the increase in the city in the speech of the upper middle class. This change may have come from the influx into the city during the war of many speakers from areas where postvocalic/r/ was a standard or prestige feature. There has been an even sharper increase in the use of this /r/ amongst younger speakers. The change in subjective attitudes has led to a change in speech patterns, although it is, in fact, only the upper middle class which has made a significant change in its speech.

It has been observed that if a certain pronunciation comes to be regarded as a prestige feature in a particular community, then it will tend to be exaggerated.

A study of language totally without reference to its social context inevitably leads to the omission of some of the more complex and interesting aspects of language, and to the loss of opportunities for further theoretical progress. One of the main factors that has led to the growth of Sociolinguistics research has been the recognition of the importance of the fact that language is a very variable phenomenon, and its variability may have as much to do with society as with language. A language is not a simple, single code used in the same manner by all people in all situations, and linguistics has now arrived at a stage where it is both possible and beneficial to begin to tackle this complexity.

Sociolinguistics then, is that part of Linguistics which is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon.

Language and Culture

Culture in its narrow sense means the arts and sciences. Probably of greater significance is the fact that the culture of a community refers to the style and tempo of every day existence; the way of life, religion, laws,

housing, dress and so on. Not least among these is language. When someone goes abroad for the first time, he is often said to be vulnerable to culture shock. That is, he might find the life-style, values, beliefs, taboos, etc., of the host country different from the one he is accustomed to. However, the greatest feeling of alienation associated with culture shock is a person's inability to understand, and to make himself understood, in the foreign country. One main reason may be the foreign language and its use.

Take the word culture in its broader perspective and sense in which it is used by cultural anthropologists. According to them, culture is something that everybody has, in contrast to the "culture" which is found only in cultured circles-in opera houses, universities, etc.

Ward Goodenough takes culture as socially acquired knowledge and states that a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe, in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members...culture being what people have to learn, as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end-product of learning:

Knowledge in the most general...sense of the term. (Goodenough) broad sense, to include both "know-how" and "know-that", for instance, to cover both the ability to tie knots and the knowledge that a one pound note buys as much as ten-penny coins. One attraction of taking this view, widely accepted between anthropologists, is that it will allow one to compare Culture with Language.

The relationship between Language and Culture is a very close one; in fact, the two are bound together so closely that it is difficult to see that one could exist without the other. It seems then, that Language and Culture are two important factors, which make a community unique. This leads one to ask and know why the people of the world live and behave differently. To put it simply, material culture, or the observable part of culture, is actually based on the

deeper values, shared knowledge and general view of the world, as experienced by members of a community. The social and physical conditions, and spiritual values of a society find their expression in the unique features of any particular language. Linguistis Sapir and Whorf maintained that the converse was also true; that a language spoken by a society influences the way in which that society thinks out the world. According to Sapir and Whorf, different languages, because of the way they are structured, tend to confine the thought patterns of the speakers within those structures; it is as if the minds of the speakers are imprisoned within the confines of the Language they speak. All European languages, in fact most languages, have ways of dividing up the concept of time. Thus they perceive the past, present and future, and allow people to talk about them by using the tense systems. However, there are some languages which do not have the tense system, e.g., the language of the American Indian Hopi tribe, is a language whose verbs do not express tense or time. But the verb system of the Hopi tribe is capable of expressing a series of categories which European and many other languages allow the speakers to express, grammatically, whether a statement is based on fact, on memory, on expectation or on generalization. The Hopi Indians merely add an ending to a verb to show these differences. The reason for this is that in Hopi culture, attitudes towards the truth of what is being said are more important than everyday considerations of time.

In short, it can be said that Culture reflects the total life experience of a community. It is both Language and Culture that make a community unique. Because a community shares cultural values, physical environment and social environment, all these aspects are reflected in the language. Therefore, it is possible that the language which a community speaks may affect its cultural outlook.

Language and Sexual Identity

Linguistics Studies of the English language suggest that just as there is a clear demarcation in the roles for men and women, in the same way this difference is reflected in the speech of men and women, as well. The language of women is likely to be less direct and less assertive than that used ·by men. In English as well as Urdu, the speech of women shows a more frequent use of devices such as question tags, in order to seek agreement with or approval for what has been said. For example, a woman is more likely to say:

- I think he is right, isn't he?

- They'll probably help us: what do you think?

- What a beautiful dress: Woah!

This does not mean that a man never uses them, but studies suggest that he uses them less frequently. Studies also show that a woman is more likely to make use of intensifiers such as very, extremely, absolutely, etc. perhaps this is because she has less confidence in the impact of what she is saying, and so she enhances her speech by the use of such words.

Another observation regarding women's speech is that fewer taboo words are used by women. Interestingly enough, studies in the USA have shown women to use more correct forms of language. This is particularly true of working, or lower middle class women, whose social dialects are often found to be a higher social class than those of their husbands. Their husbands were found to cling to the speech patterns of their own social class, as in their opinion "it was more manly". The result of the study suggests that in Britain and the United States, at least, it may be the women of a family who constitute the prime forces for upward social mobility.

Social Nature of Speech

There are a host of speech activities like conversations, quarrels, jokes, committee meetings, interviews, introductions, lessons, teasing, chit chat, etc.

In speech, one of the main questions concerns the balance between the society and the individual. For language in the sense of knowledge of linguistic items and their meaning, the balance is in favour of the social, since people learn their language by listening to others. At the same time, each individual's language is unique, since no two people have the same experience of language. What about the balance in the case of speech? Ferdinand de Saussure claimed that speech was totally individual, in that it depended only on the "will of the speaker" (1969), and conversely, that language was entirely social, being identical from one member of a speech community to another. According to Hudson he was clearly wrong about language, nor was he any nearer to the truth about speech. It is quite obvious that speech is crucial in a number of social activities, including socialization. Speech allows one to communicate with others at a much more sophisticated level than would be otherwise possible, and since communication is a social activity , it could be otherwise possible, and since communication is a social activity, it could be said that speech is also social. Although this is true, it is not directly relevant to de Saussure's claim about speech being individual, as he was referring to the knowledge involved in speech rather than the uses of it, stating that speech involved no social constraints, in contrast with language which was entirely constrained. So long as a speaker knew the relevant language by which de Saussure meant knowing which sound sequences were allowed to be used for which meanings he would be able to speak it properly by applying it as he chose. However, there are social constraints on speech, over and above those which are reflected in the linguistic items which people

know. The issue of Language and social constraints on speech is not very clear, since many of the constraints refer to specific linguistic items, or to large classes of items, and could be treated as part of language, along with what is known about meaning. This is not surprising, since many items have meanings which refer specifically to aspects of the speech-events in which they are used-notably, all the items with deictic meaning, referring to the speaker (I, we) the addressee (you) the time of speaking (present, past tense, today, etc) and the place of speaking (here, etc). Many items are often restricted to their use to certain social circumstances. The French word tu (you) is to be used only to intimates (and small children and animals): similarly, first names in English are to be used only for intimates, as opposed to names like Mr. Brown. It is easy to see how "language" and "social" constraints on speech merge, as social constraints on speech can apply not just to speech but to social behaviour in general. This conclusion supports the view that there is no clear distinction between "language" and other aspects of thought, especially in matters of meaning. The accepted term for aspects of behaviour, through which people influence and react to each other, is social interaction and speech is only one aspect of such behaviour, closely meshed with other aspects. One of the leading investigators in this field, Michael Argyle (a social psychologist) has described the field as follows (Argyle1973:9):

> "One achievement of recent research has been to establish the basic elements of which social interaction consists: current research is concerned with finding out precisely how these elements function. It is now agreed that the list consists of various signals: verbal and non-verbal, tactile, visible and audible-various kinds of bodily contact, proximity, orientation, bodily postures, physical appearance, facial expression, movement of head and hands, direction of gaze, timing of speech, emotional tone of speech, speech errors, type of

utterance and linguistics structure or utterance. Each of these elements can be further analysed and divided into categories or dimensions: each plays a distinctive role in social interaction, though they are closely interconnected".

The Function of Speech

Speech plays many different roles on different occasions. The anthropologist Bronislav Malinowski claimed that "in its primitive uses, language functions as a link in concerted human activity, as a piece of human behaviour. It is a mode of action and not an instrument of reflection." (Malinwski, 1923)

An example of this would be the kind of speech one hears form people shifting furniture: "To you ...... now up a bit" ..... and so on, where the speech acts as a control on people's physical activity, in contrast to its function in a lecture where it is intended to influence the thoughts rather than the actions of listeners. Another use of speech is simply to establish or reinforce social relations, the kind of chit-chat people engage in simply in order to show that they recognize each other's desire to obtains information (e.g. where's the class), for expressing emotions (e.g. I hate her). When people speak, they make suggestions, promises, invitations, requests, prohibitions, and so on. An account of all these different functions of speech must be formulated in terms of a general theory of social activity.

Speech as Skilled Work

Speech is one of the most important ways in which one presents a personal image for others to evaluate, both through what one says and the way one says it. It is common observation that most people want to present to the world an image of being considerate, as this is most likely to make them popular, and this turns speech into a highly cooperative activity. Usually people try to avoid exposing other peoples' weaknesses, or getting into heated controversy, unless they are sure that it will not affect the

attitude of others towards them. As a hearer, one tries hard to make sense of what others say, even when it means reading far more between the lines than is in them. The consequences of failure to cooperate successfully have been dramatically described by Goffman (1957).

> A person who chronically makes himself and others uneasy in conversation and perpetually bills encounters is a faulty interactant: he is likely to have such a baleful effect upon the social life around him that he may just as well be called a faulty person.

Hence speech and social interaction in general can be taken as skilled work. The kind of failure described by Goffman would then be due to lack of either skill, or motivation, or both. This means that both skill and motivation to work are due to society in which a person lives. In conclusion one can say that Saussure was wrong in thinking of speech simply as an individual activity, owing nothing to society.

Finally it can be said that society controls speech by providing a set of norms, which people learn to follow or occasionally to flout, more or less skillfully. Society also provides the motivation for adhering to these norms, and for putting effort into speech, as into social interaction in general. Moreover, society takes a great interest in speech, and in particular provides a set of concepts for thinking and talking about it.

Speech and Writing

The basic concern of Linguistic Analysis has been the construction of sentences, but in recent years there has been an increasing interest in analyzing the way sentences work in sequence to produce coherent stretches of language.

Two main approaches have developed. Discourse Analysis focuses on the structure of naturally occurring

spoken language, as found in such "discourses" as conversations, interviews, commentaries and speeches, Text Analysis focuses on the structure of written language, as found in such texts as essays, notices, road sign and chapters. However, both "Discourse" and "Text" can be used in a much broader sense to include all language units with a definable communicative functions, whether spoken or written. Some scholars talk about "spoken and written discourse", others about spoken and written text. In Europe, the term, "Text Linguistics" is often used for the study of the linguistic principles governing the structure of all forms of text.

The search for larger linguistic units and structures has been pushed by scholars from many disciplines. Linguistics investigate the features of language that, combine sentences when they are used in sequences.

Ethnographers and Sociologists study the structure of socio-interaction especially in the way people enter into dialogue.

Anthropologists analyse the structure of myths and folk-tales. Psychologists carry out experiments on the mental process underlying comprehension. And further contributions have come from those concerned with artificial intelligence, rhetoric, philosophy and style.

These approaches have a common concern: they stress the need to see language as a dynamic, social, interactive phenomenon, whether between speaker and listener, or writer and reader. It is argued that meaning is conveyed not by single sentences but by more complex exchanges, in which the participants' belief and expectation, the knowledge they share about each other and about the world, and the situation in which they interact, play a crucial part.

A written language is basically a representation of a spoken language. It is, however, very seldom an exact

reflection. It has been observed that a writing system might fail to represent the phonology fully and accurately.

This is however, only a special instance out of many other differences. There are often much deeper differences between a written and a spoken language. These differences are found at all levels of structure phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary and style.

Dialectal variation in spoken languages is a very familiar phenomenon. These variations are also found in written languages, but they are generally minor and not at all obvious. In English, a few are well known: colour: color; goal: jail, coru: grain, the government are/is ...... etc. differences between the spoken English of Britain and the United States are considerably more numerous and often much greater. This situation is very nearly universal. Dialectal variation in a written language is almost always much slighter than in the associated spoken language. Sometimes speech differences may be so extreme that there is no mutual intelligibility, whereas the written language in the two areas is identical. English, for example, is more globally founded in its written form than its spoken varieties.

An illustrative case is that of Germany. Over most of Germany and Austria, in a large part of Switzerland, and in small portions of other European countries, the people consider their language to be German. They are aware that not all spoken German is alike, and they may be conscious of considerable differences between their own and other speech also called German. But even when these differences are extreme, they consider the difference as merely dialectal. Many of these "dialects" are completely unintelligible to speakers of other dialects of German. Yet over all this region with its tremendous speech diversity, there is one universal written language with minor dialectal variations. As a result, any literate person can communicate with any other in writing, or by a spoken form. Written

German, is a very important special dialect of quite different a status from the local colloquials. It is often known as "Schriftdeutsch". Every school child is taught to read, write and speak this common literary language. For many of them the task is little different from learning a second language. That could also be said of the Persian used in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere in the Persian speaking world.

The reason for the above is that written German had a long and gradual development. It was originally based on a Middle German dialect. By historical accident its use spread over most of the Middle and High German dialect areas and over a large part of the Low German dialects. It successfully displaced most of the other written languages which had started developing in the area. Thus there came about a remarkable degree of uniformity in written language over a large area. Written languages are not only influenced by the spoken languages with which they are used; they are also influenced by other written languages. Coming to the English writing system, it includes a number of features other than the alphabet. One prominent element is the punctuation system. For example, the marks of sentence ends, (.), (?), etc. A "sentence" is regarded as "expressing a complete thought", or something of the kind. The writing system requires that it must have a terminal mark and begin with a capital letter. In the second place, "sentences" are classified on the basis of whether they "state a fact", ask a question, etc. there differences determine which of the terminal marks will be used. In spoken English these structure are marked by the use of the intonation contours.

However, there is only incidental correlation between the punctuation marks and the different intonation contours. Indeed, intonation contours commonly are at places where punctuation marks are prohibited, as between certain subjects and the following predicates. There is a

fundamental difference in attitude towards the two parts of the writing system. The alphabet is assumed to represent sounds. Everyone accepts therefore, that there will be difference of spelling from language to language. The punctuation marks, however, are not conceived of as representing features of speech. Instead, they mark logical units of connected writing like "sentences", "questions", "dependent clauses", and the like. Since these are phrased in terms of logic, they are generally assumed to be universal. People do not expect to find differences of punctuation from language to language.

Another factor influencing the compatibility of written and spoken languages is linguistic change. Change is taking place continually in every aspect of every dialect, though, of course, not all of these changes are independent of those in other dialects. Written languages are also subject to change beyond the broadening of the base which has just been described. The influence then can be stated in terms of the comparative rates and directions of change in the written and spoken dialects. The most obvious instance in phonology and the relatively much slower change in orthography. Almost inevitably the fit of orthography to pronunciation deteriorates. This is, of course, a major source of spelling difficulties in English.

Spelling reform in many languages has been, as in English, largely a private matter. Certain individuals have flouted public opinion and made changes in their own spellings. Some have been accepted by increasing numbers of people until the new spelling has come to dominate. Thus in America jail has replaced gaol, though the later remains in Britain. Many others have failed of general acceptance. A number of proposals are currently competing with older spellings, often generating appreciable controversy, as in the case of night: nit. Most of the changes are probably to be considered as in the direction of simplicity, but this is not always the case, as when rhyme

supplanted an older rime. This has not, however, insured that spelling will accord with pronunciation, since a number of phonemic distinctions are still unrecorded, and unpronounced letters, though diminishing in number, persist.

The effects of phonologic change on a writing system are various. A phonetic change without accompanying phonemic change has no effect. Phonemic changes may merely produce an alternative but unambiguous orthographic device. For example, light was at one time pronounced /lixt/; gh was the usual spelling for /x/. Some aberrant spellings have another function within the structure of written English. Consider the pair sight and site. It is quite clear to write The Sight is pleasing, or The Site is pleasing. That these two words are homophonous does not affect their usability within the written language. But neither of these sentences is used in normal speech. Instead, something like "It's a nice view" or I "like the location", is much more likely. The difference between light and sight has a phonemic reference: that between sight, site, and cite has a morphemic reference. The English writing system is, therefore, only partially phonologic in its basics. Written and spoken languages differ in their vocabularies. The first impression is always that the long established written language has a much larger vocabulary than any spoken dialect. In part, this is illusory. The general public, and even professional linguists, have notoriously underestimated the vocabularies of spoken languages. Colloquial words can easily be missed as some are under verbal taboos which prevent their use in writing, entirely, and in public speech, partially. Two other characteristics of literary vocabularies are the homonyms and synonyms. Many written languages have a large number of homonyms. Many of them are amply different in spelling to the conservation of orthography. English is only modestly equipped with such pairs, e.g., species / species, the singular and plural are alike both in spelling and

pronunciation. Abbreviated, however, there is a distinction, sp:spp.

The second peculiarity of written vocabulary is the abundance of synonyms or near synonyms. Often these are words originating in different dialects. Or one or more may be loan words from some other languages. In any case once a word enters a literary language, it tends to persist, since there is a certain permanence to written records lacking in spoken utterance. Moreover, in some literary traditions the effect is desired. This puts a special value upon synonyms. However this feature of style is not universal. In some language, repetition, especially following certain established patterns, is considered desirable. To conclude, it can be said that people tend to think of the spoken language as a rather poor version of the written language. In pronunciation, for example, if someone is in doubt, he is likely to appeal to spelling.

A moment's reflection will soon make it clear that speech cannot in any serious sense be derived from writing, and cannot, therefore, depend on it for correctness or non-correctness. Not only did the written language develop much later, historically, but also everyone learnt to speak long before they learnt to write. If there is any priority it is in the spoken, not the written form of language. However, it can be said that speech is ephemeral while writing is permanent, and that speech is full of errors and false starts while writing more correctly follows the rules. It is also true that written language changes more slowly than the spoken, and that it is, therefore, always more archaic. Written language is often far more homogeneous than the spoken. Because it is the language of education, it tends to be the same all over the country, whereas the spoken language differs, and it represents many dialects.

Limits on a Writer's Options

Texts present themselves as complex linguistic structures, the meaning of which may be constructed or

reconstructed in the act of reading itself. Traditionally, such process of constructing meaning on the basis of a text is studied by stylistics. As the term indicates, this discipline confronts the idea of "Style" as a concrete manifestation of textuality. Texts are aimed at particular goals and are affected by the specific situation in which the writer and reader find themselves. This requires them to employ a dynamic text strategy. However, this, in turn involves several forces and principles at once. For instance, in writing a poem, the poet has to obey rules of meter and rhyme, and principles of composition and thematic development, over and above the rules of the language, which, of course, have to be obeyed, too. The ultimate surface structure of the text is the result of the weightings allocated to various structural elements in the text strategy. The weight given to a specific element and its subsequent selection and inclusion in text, is thus the outcome of a complex decision-making process in which the importance given to one textual parameter is held against the value estimate for other parameters.

The ultimate decisions made are dependent on text type. This calls for a flexible notion of Style. In other words Style is intimately tied to social acting. Both writer and reader must estimate the appropriateness of linguistics structure of contextually relevant norms deriving from the situation, the particular goals aimed at, and the specific text type under consideration. By assigning weightings of the various decisions made in these respects, the notion of Style as situationally determined may be given further development. What emerges is a more powerful model of literary communication in which the social forces do not only form the "context" for the text, but are directly involved in its ultimate shaping and functioning. The weight of a parameter in relation to other parameters. In metrical-regular poetry, the values of the metrically parameter or parameters that steer metre and rhyme are

heavily weighted. In short, styles are born out of specific patterns of parameter values and weights.

To conclude, it can be said that the choices and selections that produces of text, therefore, make from the system of language, are principled choices, instituted by social, messy, "real" worlds of discourse, not by idealized abstract worlds. The structures – the forms – of language do not pre-exist in social and cultural processes; they are not encoded in some sort of psychological imprint. The forms, and hence meanings of language are shaped and determined by institutional forces.

Linguistics needs to recognize that all texts are multi-leveled, multi-layered, multi-meaninged; their meanings are not the sole property of the speaker/writer, but are constructed and produced in communicative interaction. It further needs to recognize that the judgements and choices authors make in producing texts and making meanings, are not arbitrary , but are institutionally and, therefore, ideologically determined.

Thus it can be said that the community / society one lives in shapes the language one uses.

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Teaching a Foreign Language to Beginners

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ABSTRACT

There are many traps for the foreign language teacher, particularly for the one just starting out. The 'hands on' experience of a senior teacher is always useful for easing the newcomer over the numerous pedagogical, psychological and social hurdles s/he encounters, especially with beginners. This is a broad-based introduction which contains useful advice for the new (and not-so-new) teacher. It prepares him or her for what will almost certainly prove to be a trying experience, but one that also offers significant compensations. The reader is led through viable oral/aural and reading/writing approaches and then through dictation and translation activities in what the author describes as a practical 'recipe' for effective foreign language teaching distilled from three decades of experience in the field.

Teaching a language - occidental or oriental— is committing yourself to a highly challenging activity. It is like living in a world of obstacles; it is being in the linguistic and cultural 'know'. If you were to tell somebody that having done Masters in a language, you teach at the beginner level, be ready for a remark of the sort: "Oh! Lucky you who do not have to deal with higher level

classes!" Honestly speaking, teaching beginners is not as easy as it seems, or as it is at the higher level. It is by no means 'a piece of cake'. Why? The reasons are simple:

At the beginners level you are faced with a comparatively large group of learners. This group is heterogeneous in several respects: age, social set up, motivation, level of education, schooling, etc. Day one - you enter the class. You find yourself before a mosaic of a group of class: faces with varied features, minds that are at work in a thousand ways, the interrogations (on the faces), the unuttered queries, the grimaces, the meaningful smiles, the impatience for the magical wand to do the magic, the twisting on the chairs that squeak, the messaging on the mobiles, the chewing of the gum, and all this coupled with a unique aroma - the loud colognes mixed with all kinds of perfumes, particularly in summers! Wow! What a weird world you are in! For a second you feel that you have lost all your senses, your head starts turning like a whirlpool. You feel like being in a court of law standing in the 'box' of the accused, ready to face the attacks from the defense. The slightest bit of lacuna in your argumentation, the least bit of shrug in your comportment, and the verdict is pronounced against you. You are stamped "bad teacher" – a reputation that will haunt you if not forever, at least for the time this particular group is around, and you will be quoted as a "bad example" for those who have yet to come. As a beginners' language teacher you have to play a dual role - that of a psychologist and a pedagogue. You need to understand the psyche of the students and teach them in a way that is synonymous of hypnosis. If you succeed in doing so, you will be crowned with success, otherwise you are doomed. First impression is the last impression; isn't it so?

On the contrary, at higher levels, the groups tend to be smaller. They have matured over the semester (s). They have already acquired basic language skills. You have managed to develop a certain rapport with them. They

know your shortcomings and your strong points; and above all, at this level, there are more lectures and less of the traditional "spoon feeding" sort of classes. If some day you are unprepared for the class, you are not feeling really well, you have a meeting to attend, you can afford to tell them to work on their own, you can give them some assignment, you can take them to the library (though this is not recommended). But can you take these liberties at the beginners' level? No.

Just look back and recall the first day of the Beginning of Semester. You are going to have the first class with the new comers. You are nervous let's admit that we are all nervous on "Day One" even if we have been teaching for decades. It's like the first day of school when the parting moment is the most difficult for the child; he clings to his mother, shouts, screams, yells, gesticulates in all possible ways but once he is snatched by the guard or the teacher on duty, this "storm in the tea cup" subsides all of a sudden. And how instantly it subsides is amazing! Similarly, she (the female teacher), on day one, looks again and again at her books, at her register, changes the setting the register on top, no the book on top, no the register, no the book - "have I got every thing I need, pen, pencil, marker......?" is the question that she mutters more than once. She goes in and comes out of the staff room time and again "Can any one go to the class for me?" she pleads crouching and pressing the stomach hard and finally leaves looking quite morbid. He (the male teacher) adjusts his tie more than once, fixes his belt, tucks the shirt in, pulls the shirt out, passes his hand over his hair to assure that the little or even no hair that he has looks perfectly jelled, twists his books under his arm and gathering all the courage he announces: "I am going!" as if he is some cavalier all set to manifest the skills of his chivalry. He marches defiantly towards the class. There is nothing to feel embarrassed about, dear colleagues! We all have been through this experience of having butterflies. It is but natural. Semester

after semester we have been going to the beginners class but there is always going to be the "first day', the "maiden encounter". But once you are "in" it (the class), it is your domain, you are the master and now the ball is in your court. And here are a few tips for you to follow:

Before starting with the actual lecture, you need to insist on certain important issues that will facilitate your task as a teacher. Don't forget that once you are faced with a group of students, big or small, homogeneous or heterogeneous, quiet or noisy, you are on a path that is full of hurdles. It is not only your personality and comportment that count but also the way you "manage" the class. Your students take you for a super human, for a god, for a person who knows all, a Messiah who has the solution to every thing. Don't betray them - don't ever betray their trust. On the contrary, gain their confidence; build a rapport of mutual entente between you. Don't cheat. Be honest to yourself. Don't ever feel ashamed if you don't know any thing; or if, despite yourself, you make an error. It is perfectly normal. Mastering a language does not mean being the Master of it! Can you claim to be the master of your mother tongue? We learn every day and believe it or not, we learn more while teaching than we do as a student. Why? Because as a student, we are all, unfortunately, grade conscious. We limit ourselves to what is crucially important the key notes, the most important chapters etc. Moreover, you may be prepared for a hundred odd questions; yet there will be questions that would have escaped you as much as a student as, a teacher also. So, if you have been wrong, admit your mistake with grace. You will see that your students will appreciate you for your honesty. Because there are the wicked of the group there always are who are sitting there just to judge you, to corner you, to upset you. Don't get scared of them, as it is their right to put you to task. There are certainly those who couldn't stop laughing when they hear a new word. Ignore them in the beginning but after one or two lessons, tell

them, and tell them loud and clear that it is not a class of pleasantries and that they are not there for merry-making, that they should take their class seriously or leave, and that a number of things in their language would make others laugh! Give them a list of the "dos" and the "don'ts" and stay firm on your principles – no compromises! One little compromise and the entire chain is broken! And you will see how smoothly your class functions.

If you are an Occidental language teacher, you will certainly face peculiar problems. Whereas the case is different for the Oriental languages where we find a commonality of religion and culture and to some extent, the social set up. You would have undoubtedly faced situations where the words 'love', 'kiss', 'beloved', sweet heart' and the kind, and questions such as "do you have a girl/boy friend?" "do you date?" "what would you like your future husband/wife to be like?" etc., make the girls blush and try in vain to hide their faces and keep giggling softly instead of answering your question, make the boys stammer while answering. And, there would certainly be those (particularly boys) who would not, very innocently though, stop seeking equivalent vocabulary in the target language for all such words which might make the (female) teacher feel uncomfortable: "how do you say beautiful eyes? pretty lady? my heart throbs? lovely face?" And your test as a language teacher starts here - how you handle the 'uncomfortable' situations and the 'embarrassing' moments in the class! First of all you need to make things clear: one, "Occident and Orient are as distinct as they are in their appellation, so, once you are in the language class, you are no more within the four walls of your institution, you are within the parameters of the country whose language you are learning; you are in a given environment which is no longer yours but that of an alien country and you have to, despite yourself, adapt to this novel situation. So, stop raising your eye-brows at small things, stop being awe-struck at trivial expressions, stop giggling like kids, behave

like grown ups as you are and be receptive to others, once you have decided to learn their language"; two, give them the vocabulary in a matter of fact way and if you feel that things are going too far, just set your limits and tell them that they will learn more in days to come or all would start weighing on them. But don't ever stagger! Most of this is meant to upset you and nothing else. Any person, irrespective of age, once seated as a student behaves like a student, even you would do the same if you were not standing behind the rostrum to deliver the lecture. It is human nature, we become where we are placed. You neither have to be offensive nor defensive, just do your job and do it right.

Now let's come to the more practical side of the class. As you are all aware, the pedagogy of a foreign language is based on four basic acquisitions: written & oral comprehension and written & oral expression. Methodologists and linguists agree that written comprehension and written expression are passive (quiet) exercises whereas oral comprehension and oral expression are active (loud) exercises. As such, teaching the two former skills will be easier as compared to the latter two. And this is a universally known fact - if 80% students clear an entry exam, only 20% are declared successful after the oral. There are the talkative souls but being talkative does not mean speaking with coherence and logic and does not signify either, having the skills of argumentation. Be it comprehension or expression, be it written or oral, the objective remains the same: good acquisition of written and oral skills in the target language. If this objective is not attained, we have, certainly failed in our task as pedagogues of language. Let's see how to go about these skills:

Zero Lesson:

Let's start from "Zero Lesson" before indulging ourselves in comprehension and expression in the true

sense of the word. Hopefully, all language teachers follow the principle of Zero Lesson. This means that for one week and even for two weeks (depending on the pace of the group), you do not follow any proper method of teaching. That is, you teach and at the same time you don't teach! It means to say that you simply familiarize the group with the language. And remember, language cannot be taught in isolation. Language is not the structure alone. It encompasses other un-said elements, history, geography, civilization and most importantly, the culture of the country whose language is being taught. Your students should not simply speak the language. They should be able to hear it, touch it, smell it, see it, taste it and even get the feel of it. Then and only then are you going to succeed as a language teacher. It goes without saying that your intention should not be to stuff your students with vocabulary, structure, grammar etc. and you should be cognoscente of the fact that things go slow in the beginning. So find yourself the time to talk to your students about the salient historical facts, the geographical situation, the key cultural facts dress, eating habits, mode of living, education etc. Ask them to draw a map of the country and fill in the main features including the neighboring countries. You can then put up the best on the class board. Ask them to make a list of some interesting facts about the country. If your beginner students walk out of your institution with a language certificate with no or almost no knowledge about the country whose language they have studied, your job is half done they came ignorant about the country and they left ignorant. Other tips for your Zero Lesson are:

- don't ask them why they opted for the said language as this question was already asked during the interview for admission; rather ask them if they know any thing about the country or the language, some of them might have already visited the country and can apprise others; some might even have studied before coming to the class;

- ask them if they are already familiar with any vocabulary (even if they don't pronounce it correctly) of the target language – it can be any word, any expression, a trade mark etc. and keep writing those words on the board as you will be required to give the correct pronunciation towards the end of the class, this exercise will also help you sideline the 'fake beginners', that is, those who had been already exposed to the language in one way or the other but don't want to expose their skills;

- teach them the greetings, the presentations, the commonly needed expressions of which the most liked is 'it's the break', or even 'that's all', 'I am tired' and so on;

- common question tags (where do you live? how old are you? etc) , basic counting, days of the week, months of the year, telling the time, professions, nationalities, all form part of Zero Lesson;

- you can gradually move on to some grammar – conjugation of working verbs (to have and to be) which will automatically familiarize them with the subject pronouns and help them in constructing simple sentences.

Now let's study each basic skill at a time:

Oral Expression:

The most critical question is what to do in the early oral expression classes? The students at this stage are hardly familiar with the structure of the language, they have almost no vocabulary, and they can't even pronounce properly - what to do? You are worried and genuinely so particularly if you have this class in the first week. First of all, adjust your timetable in a way that oral expression is the last skill to be taught, have it towards the end of the week. By that time, they would have assimilated certain

structures, phrases, vocabulary which would help you conduct the class. For instance, you can ask them what is their name, what is the name of the person sitting next to them, ask them to ask each others' names and even your name, how are they doing and make them question others on the same, how to greet formally and informally, give them situations and see whether they are able to use the proper greeting (for languages in which this distinction exists), make them talk to each other in the target language in whatever vocabulary they have. In short, it is going to be an oral revision class for all that was done before.

In the beginning, even the most naïve and the laziest of students are curious to learn new words. Rest assured, they do practice among themselves. They are perhaps reluctant to repeat in front of you but they do refresh their memories during the break or even at home in order to boast at their knowledge of a new language. No matter what they do, how they do and where they do, it is all the same to the teacher so long as they speak in the target language which is perhaps, at the moment, not the standard language but which is certainly not any other language that they are familiar with and not even their mother tongue, but the target language. They must not at all be discouraged at any stage and particularly not at this early stage of learning. They are adults all right, but they are nevertheless in the process of learning the language. They are as much novice as children learning to utter words, or to keep balance on their feet. Too much of correction = blockage, hesitation, lack of confidence = passiveness, frustration, which is not the objective.

But what to do when it comes to role playing exercises, to proper conversation, to discussion? At this stage, the passive students prefer that the group leader does the job. He might not be rich in ideas (which are fed by the former), but he is certainly more eloquent than others. In role playing, some of the students would prefer to take the

roles in which least conversation is required. For instance, in acting out a scene at a café, they would prefer to be the waiter who would say "yes sir/madam, I am coming, enjoy your meal, thank you etc...." rather than the client who will be asking for the menu, deciding the menu, choosing, ordering, etc. What to do? How to overcome this obstacle? The best would be to give the turn to all to speak. Those who are content with answers like "yes, thanks, etc", would take the turn of asking the questions. Every one speaks, every one participates, even if it comes to saying one sentence, but it should be a complete well- structured sentence. If he is blocked, if he makes a mistake, the best would be to ask others to give the "best" solution and then, make the said student repeat the whole sentence. Remember that you are a psychologist without saying, so you have to be careful with your choice of words. "That's wrong" is a reprimand which is no doubt upsetting whereas "let's have a better   the ideal, the best version" is involving your student in rectifying "his" wrong. See the difference? But this does not mean that while others are doing the corrections, he is looking out of the window and when it comes to the final version he is content with nodding his head to give the impression to the teacher that he has grasped every thing, whereas he has not even heard half of it. He must repeat and he must repeat it correctly even if it comes to trying more than once. Another useful exercise is dividing them in two groups. Each student from a group asks at least one question to one student each from the other group and vice versa. Tell them at the very out-set that the questions should not be personal in order not to indulge the class in any uncomfortable situation. If a student hesitates in answering, don't insist. Give him time, the breathing space. Move on to the next student and even go till the end. Then come back to him. By this time he certainly would have got the answer -- others have helped him out, you know it, he knows it, doesn't matter so long as he speaks in the target language.

Follow the golden rule for a successful conversation class: "I hear only in the target language. I speak only in the target language. For any other language, I am deaf and dumb!"

Oral Comprehension:

If you realize, 'oral comprehension' starts from the very day when a language learner sets his foot in the language class. The teacher enters and says "good morning" in a target language. The students rise and the teacher with the gesture of his/her hand tells them to sit down. Perhaps they can't decipher the exact words but they make out at least that whatever was said when the teacher entered was a greeting and what accompanied the gesture certainly meant to be seated. Whatever it is, the comprehension of the language has already started. Likewise, when the teacher says "good morning" and the students understand that it meant a greeting is a comprehension by itself. That it meant "good day" or "hello" is immaterial. The essential thing is that they place these words in a given situation. Come to think of it, what is actually meant by oral comprehension? Comprehending what was uttered by some body. As such, the teacher's task becomes difficult. If it means comprehending what was said, then it also means pronouncing and repeating correctly what was said. A non-native can never claim to have the pronunciation of the natives. But there is always a good and a bad pronunciation!! And an effort should be made to be as close to the native pronunciation as possible. Agreed that there is the interference of the mother tongue, but aren't we, as speakers of Urdu, lucky to have all the possible hard and soft sounds? That makes our job of pronunciation easier. For the hard nuts to crack, just mispronounce their name or even a few structures and ask them how it feels? They will get the message and will at least try honestly! But be careful also not to be rigid with those who have genuine problems pronouncing certain

words. To be sure if they are not cheating, you can ask them to pronounce a word in their mother tongue and you will have the answer. However, don't insist too much on pronunciation or it would sound a class of phonetics that you are not dealing with!

For the beginners, we can have a variety of exercises:

The teacher says something and the student acts, for instance "stand up" (he rises from his seat), "sit down" (he sits down), "rub the board" (he rubs off), "go out" (he leaves the class), "come in" (he enters) etc. This is an animated exercise; it gives the chance to every one to comprehend (to play, if I dare say so), to interact, brings some movement in the class, awakens the drowsy and forces the very shy to move from their seats. Later on, we can read a story, a fable for instance, that we have all known since childhood, and we ask them to narrate (of course in the target language) what they have understood. The objective of this exercise is the comprehension in a new language, of something that is already known. They don't have to concentrate on the story, as they already know it; they simply have to open their ears to the structure. We can move on to reading an unseen text and giving them a MCQ type exercise. It can be an interview, a news bulletin, an advertisement, and as the class progresses, a song   music is always animating, it awakens the soul. There are two ways of doing it: the teacher is the narrator or it can be done on the audio-cassette/CD. Ensure that the quality of sound is good, that the sound is not muffled, that the speed is right (we can adjust the speed) and that your selection is not too backdated. The same exercise can be done on the video. They watch a sketch (it can jolly well be a cartoon) and then come up with the words, the phrases, the expressions that they heard even if they don't know their meaning. The teacher can intervene to help them out. Instead of giving them the actual word right away, give them the equivalent word or expression in

their mother tongue (we assume that the teacher and the taught have the same mother tongue) or a commonly known language. Let their minds work. Solving the riddle will enrich their vocabulary at the same time. The video is very helpful at an early stage as it is much easier to decipher a sound / a word by the lip movement and of course, watching something on the screen is always interesting. Avoid an exercise of the sort in which the students have to listen long texts, take down notes and then answer a given set of questions in two, three or even more sentences. There are two basic problems here: two simultaneous comprehensions are involved listening and writing writing means correct spellings. Be sure of your objective. Is it the comprehension of the oral or the correction of the spellings? In other words, are you judging their comprehension of the text read out to them or their skill to write correctly what they heard? Watch out, its not a class of dictation!

Remember that oral comprehension should be oral/aural. The teacher should not deviate from his mission of doing an oral exercise otherwise it would become written comprehension.

Written Expression:

"This is the most hated exercise. It is the most painful job. It is the most gruesome task. This is the one that makes us loose marks in the exams. This is the one that paints the copies red. This is the one in which the teacher is content at writing a topic on the board and then sulking in his chair, flipping through a magazine or correcting the piled up assignments." This is the general feeling of the students. For the teacher, "this is the most difficult of endeavors". We never know enough how to go about it. Giving a topic to the students and asking them to write on it, does not solve the problem. In fact, 'composition' and 'essay' are misnomers for written expression. Written expression actually means expressing in black and white

and knowing how to express, as well as being able to express. So this can be anything to write upon, as the objective is to judge the written competence of the students. This can be done in various ways:

Preparing the ad for a product, (for an event due to take place in your town etc.) writing an informal letter and later on, a formal letter, writing a story, a paragraph, knowing how to fill in the forms (admission/visa etc.), how to write an application, how to place an order for something, how to prepare the CV, etc. It can be a critical analysis, a review, a self-creation (could be a poem, a story), all depending at what level the class has reached. In the very beginning, instead of asking the students to write 10 lines (that's what we generally do) on something like 'Myself', 'My Friend', 'My House' etc, teach them how to fill a slip giving individual information. Give a series of pictures or one rich picture with suggested vocabulary and ask them to write a story, or you can even give them the vocabulary in jumbled order and ask them to fill in the blanks and complete the text. Then slowly and gradually move on to other exercises as suggested earlier. They can write a small note on a post card, an informal letter, send a telegram, write an invitation card, a greeting card..... Do things that are practical. They will perhaps never have to write, once they are out of the language class, an 'essay' on "An Unforgettable Incident Of My Life"!! But they will certain be required to fill in a form, need to correspond, give in their CV, write a letter, request for something, etc. and they should be able to do this on their own. You need to be innovative, to be creative. You need to think of all possible options to attain your objective without the exercise weighing heavy on the students. You need to adapt yourself to the practical side of things and shun away from the traditional. This will not only facilitate your task but also enliven your class. This will avoid you from going through the trauma of almost rewriting your students'

'master pieces'. You are frustrated, they are frustrated, and all this to no effect!

Written Comprehension:

"We write what we understand and that's not a big deal'" is the general impression of the students. They don't take this class seriously. They like it as it helps them balance their grades. They get into the habit of 'bunking' the classes. The most serious of the lot do the exercise at home and hand it over to the teacher the next day who is also satisfied, "at least this chap did the work!" But is this the truth? No, no and no! Written Comprehension is actually a 'prelude' to Written Expression. In the oral, quite a number of things go unnoticed but this is not the case in written. Actually what happens is that we teachers also do not take this skill seriously. Let's be honest. We also grab a text preferably that already has questions at the end, or we make an effort to formulate nine odd questions of which the tenth is imperatively going to be: "give a summary of the text" and hand in the photocopies to the students. The class is busy, they don't bother you, they look up for the difficult words in the dictionary or consult each other, copy each other's work and by that time the class is over. We are content, they are content. But this contentment is in fact synonymous of 'discontentment'. None of us has attained his objective. The problem is that no pedagogical manual gives 'ready to use' exercises for written comprehension. So we need to improvise them and create our own exercises and this is what we don't generally like. We also tend to do things the easy way. But there are several easy ways of preparing exercises for written comprehension: we can give a text to the students and ask them to read it aloud (one sentence each) - this helps reading – but we don't explain the text even if there are new structures or unseen vocabulary. We let the students decipher the sense. This is what is called comprehension. Then they answer a series of questions that are paraphrased to help them 'discreetly'

They manage to do the exercise. The class advances. We now select texts of slightly higher level. We change the problematic. We ask them to reproduce what they understood, to suggest a title for the text (other than the one already given). We underline a few words, a few expressions and ask them to look up for their explanation in the target language only. We can also ask them to make sentences with the selected words. In our selection of texts, in our approach of formulating the questions, we should always be careful. We should see to it that written comprehension by no means resembles or becomes written expression. Otherwise the whole exercise would become redundant. They would start complaining about repetitions. They would loose interest. They would start questioning the teacher's competence. And all will get messed up. We can also, at a later stage, depending on the level of the students, suggest to them to read something – a book in easy (target) language, texts of methods other than the one practiced in the class, a magazine, a news paper, whatever, and to maintain a file. It would be like a project and the very word project has its value   it is fascinating, it is impressive! They can draw, write, prepare on the computer   the choice is theirs'. But!! Watch out that it is their own personal work – done in group? yes okay   but not at all with the help of seniors nor should it be downloaded. There are easy texts of history, geography etc. which can be exploited. There are equally easy texts of famous novels that can be read. But all the material should be updated and preferably different from the other. Remember, written comprehension means comprehending what is written and then giving proof of it in writing but this reproduction should be in your own words and not an 'essay' by any means.

Textual Grammar:

Even though the pedagogues and the methodologists underline the importance of written and

oral skills in comprehension and expression, there is no denying the fact that grammar forms an essential part of foreign language teaching. "It is the most difficult of all skills. It is dry. It is boring. It is redundant. It is all the bad adjectives", complain the language learners. For the language teachers, "It is an enduring task". It is tiring. It is interminable. It is a brain racking." Nevertheless, grammar needs to be taught. Otherwise how shall one learn the correct language structure? Comprehensions and expressions cannot take care of every thing. Grammar is very rightly knick-named as the 'grand-mother' [as they rhyme in French, gram (maire) = grand-mère] of all learning, and it is up to the teacher to make it as 'swallow able' and as 'digest able' as possible. One way of doing is to select activities which can render the whole exercise animating: writing wrong options on the board and asking for their correct solutions, inter-exchanging each others assignments for correction (they always love to dig out others' mistakes and in doing so, they learn without saying), giving multiple equivalents and ticking the relevant box (MCQ type). Remember, never try to stuff them with too much of details and rules. It weighs on them It scares them. They leave every thing aside and concentrate on grammar and grammar alone. But isn't it that a subject of grammar whether it is spread over three hours or one hour, counts for as many marks in the exams as others? So we should try to keep a balance, and also remember that grammar is taken care of in the other four skills also, though it is not taught in the literal sense of the word. An effort should also be made not to give too much of independent work (to be done at home). It should preferably be done in group and corrected in group. Redundant exercises should be avoided. Repetitions, in any case, are never appreciated. At a later stage we can also ask them the "why" of their choice but watch out, we can easily get trapped in it! As, we always tell them not to look for too much of reasons, as there are more exceptions and fewer

rules. Isn't it? So ask for explanations only where it is genuinely possible to explain. We can also be faced with situations like, "we are here to learn to speak the language and what we end up doing is nothing but grammar, grammar and grammar. We write more and speak less." And rightly so! Expression = written, comprehension = written, grammar = written, oral comprehension = half written! So what to do? We must, while preparing our time-table, spread all the subjects over equal number of hours as grammar is (indirectly) done all the time, in writing, in comprehending, in speaking. Workload of students should be lightened. Too much of explanations, details, rules and regulations should be avoided. The obsolete and the less common structures and tenses should not be taught. We should be realistic that they can't master every thing in six months – one year. Once they are able to read, write and speak, they will learn many a things without any counseling or lecturing!

Dictation:

With reference to NIML's (National Institute of Modern Languages) and then NUML's (National University of Modern Languages) course of studies, dictation forms 25% of 'essay'. Why? None of us ever questioned. We have been doing it semester after semester after semester after----! What is the purpose of dictation after all? Teaching phonetics? But phonetics is an altogether different field. Teaching the phonetic sounds? That is taken care of in oral comprehension! Assessing how good or bad the students write? That is the business of written expression! So in my opinion, dictation should be removed altogether. It is a repetitive exercise. The same number of marks should be added in the so to say 'essay'! Whatever manuals that we can find for dictation (an attachment of the method) are generally based on phonetic type, tongue twister like sentences. (eg. The Mayor went to the fair to check the fare). If despite us, dictation has to be

done compulsorily, what should be the 'modus apperendi'? I would suggest that instead of dictating isolated sentences, a paragraph should be chosen from the already reviewed structures. New words should be added to it (the unseen words so to say) to assess the audition skills of the students. We need to make our own texts for this purpose and we need to change each semester otherwise only the first ones to counter the 'unseen' become the guinea-pigs and those who follow suit benefit from the previous group. Avoid independent corrections. The best method is to call one student at a time and ask him/her to write one sentence on the board. Ask others if it is right. If no, call the following student to come and do the corrections. This involves the whole group and by speaking aloud, they remember! You can even have the copies exchanged they correct and they may even mark. It will become a fun exercise!

Translation:

Again with reference to the above, translation forms a part of the second semester of beginners' course of studies (Diploma Level). Why? Why not from the very beginning? Why after six months? Why translation? Shouldn't translation be an exclusive part of interpretation? Because, are the students really able to translate at this level? Frankly speaking, nothing much! They are still struggling in the language. Their process of learning the language in the literal sense of the word has not yet come to end! So what can we expect of them? For, translation is a highly professional skill. If at this stage, translation is meant to test the structural and the grammatical skills of the students, isn't it equally meant to evaluate their skill in English? As the course of study says: English-target language and target language-English translation. What percentage of our learners has its hands on English? Where do they usually loose marks? In the target language-English version, no doubt! They dread it. It is their nightmare. Once again it is a maze, an impasse! And then, they have not even been trained for it. So, either translation should be

done from the very beginning or not at all at this level of learning the language. If on the one hand we as language teachers insist on teaching in the target language, to make use of whatever methods (mimic, mime, acting ....) but translation, then isn't it that we contradict ourselves? But once again, if we are forced to teach it at this level, what would be the best way to handle this job? First thing, we need to go to the Library and look up in the English Section, texts that are designed for the learners of English language. We will definitely find texts that suit our needs. Never invent your own texts. Never translate texts from the target language in English and then use them as texts of English for translation in the target language. Secondly, we should have diversity in our choice of texts. They can be a letter, a dialogue, a telephone conversation, a story, a publicity text and so on. This will help our students in the writing skills as well. The choice of our selection should be such that we automatically review the structures already taught and not at all those that are yet to be taught. This will help revising grammar. Thirdly, again like in Dictation, corrections should be done collectively in the class, on the board, involving each student. For this, you need to give the text a week ahead of your scheduled class so that they come prepared to the class. Don't spare those who did not do their assignment, give them time and ask them to give the equivalent 'extemporary'. No excuse for "I was absent" unless one is absent for the whole week. It is the imperative duty of the student to check with the classmates what was done in the class during his absence!

Conclusion:

One can easily derive from above that teaching and particularly teaching a foreign language is not a single-handed task. It is reciprocal – teacher-learner-teacher. What counts in the beginning is particularly how well a teacher 'manages' the class. This can be achieved only if you have command over the language, which leads to your confidence and ultimately your hold on your class. Your

fright of your students, your staggering, your stammering, your mumbling, your annoyance are all reflective of your weaknesses as a teacher and of your lesser competence. Remarks of the sort "If you tease me, I'll tease you even more", "If you don't cooperate with me, I'll be even more uncooperative", "If you are rude to me, I'll be even more rude" and also "Remember, 'I am' the key to your grades, so the choice is yours, be good and get good grades, be bad and get bad grades", not only ruin the sanctity of your profession but are also a clear manifestation of your own shortcomings. You as teachers, as language teachers in particular, need to give proof of your skills as a teacher. You need to prove your worth. As you all know that, "Actions speak louder than words." So learn to 'command' respect rather than 'demand' it. Teaching is a quick rewarding profession. It is a give and take process, you give your best and you get the best. This best comes in two ways, your popularity as a teacher and the excellence of your students. How proud you feel when you see your students serving at good posts and recognizing you any time and any where they come across you not because you have been their teacher but a teacher who has really taught and from whom they have actually learned. One important thing, learn to admit your mistakes, and I am repeating this point as it is most important for us. We all make mistakes. 'To err is human!' Worse is saying in the class, "I am never wrong" and the worst is not admitting that you were wrong. We can all be wrong but if we close our eyes from reality, we end up doing more wrong to our own self than to the student. The pigeon closes its eyes on seeing the cat. It opens its eyes and the cat is still there. It closes its eyes again and opens again and the cat is not gone. This goes on for some time until it is eaten away. Why didn't it do what should have been done – fly away? Similarly, instead of closing the eyes intending to thwart the danger, why don't we do we do what should be done – look up for the correct solution! In not doing so, we are not only putting an end to

our learning process but are also ruining our students. And believe me, language teaching even more than language learning is very tricky. In any case, teaching is a continuous learning process. You learn every day   this is not a saying but a fact and is what teaching is all about, learning and transmitting what you learned. 'Patience' is the key word for a language teacher. You have to be overtly patient as you are with a child. What I wish to pass on to you is what I learned from my teachers. Don't frown or put on a grimace at the incorrect language structures of your students. Remember that they are novice in the language. They are still groping in the dark. When a student is talking to you and if he/she utters an incorrect sentence, lets say for example, "How can I does this?", what you can do is, repeat the question correctly as if you were sharing the thought with that person, "How can I do this? How can I do this? Let's see how you can do this!" You repeating twice not only makes the individual discretely aware of the mistake but will also serve as reminder for the correct structure. As a language teacher, you need to interact with your class. Interacting does not mean giving away yourself which is generally termed as being "free" with the students – "he/she is very free with the students"! I would call it a coinage. It actually means being frank with the students. Be liberal but not frank. Your students should know their limits and you should know your limits. Being too distant also affects the students as much as being too frank. This interaction should be in the target language only. They practice the language and you give them the correct structure till such time that they master it. Interacting never means sharing your personal lives, it means and only means being within the parameters of your studies.

Try the above recipe with your students and see what it gives! Good luck!

NOTE: The article is based on almost thirty years of language teaching and particularly at the beginners' level.

Computers and the Teaching of Humanities

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ABSTRACT

The potential of the computer in education is still underutilized in Pakistan. The author raises parallels with an experiment in Cuenca near Madrid in Spain in the early nineteen-eighties to raise the awareness of teachers to the possibilities of the computer. In the light of feedback from this experiment, the author proposes a number of caveats with a number of possibilities and recommendations. Among the caveats she points out that the computer could become an instrument for a new wave of colonization if people are not alert to its dangers. Also, the computer should not be used merely as a poor substitute for a teacher. Its complementary role should be understood. Its capacity for the accurate storage and retrieval of vast amounts of knowledge takes the strain off the memory of the teacher. The old image of the teacher as Mr. or Ms. 'Know-all' can be replaced by a more dynamic and creative teaching paradigm. The computer neutralizes the relevance of cramming masses of details in order to pass examinations. Its progressive and judicious use would help educational planners, teachers and students in Pakistan to cope with the imperatives of a rapidly changing world.

In 1984, Spain, the country where I was born, was lagging behind in the midst of the cybernetic revolution that took Europe by storm.

A group of humanists, mainly artists and thinkers about culture (a musician, three painters with three very different approaches to their trade: chromo musical, geometrical and serial-, an architect, a geneticist, an anthropologist, a palaeographer, a demographic historian, a philologist, three poets, three engineers of three different disciplines, a novelist, a linguist, a philosopher, a dancer, an ancient geography and portulan specialist, and an environmental biologist), with the support of an enthusiastic team of well wishers decided to do something about it.

We decided to share with teachers of primary and secondary education the research, the openings and the discoveries brought about by the use of the computer in very disparate, and generally non technological fields.

We chose a small beautiful town, Cuenca, full of crumbling monuments and vestiges of a glorious past, whose very few left inhabitants were on their way to migrate also, to the not so far away capital, Madrid.

We thought we could establish a new, clean, non pollution industry there, that would boost the dwindling economy of the town, would attract visitors, would reduce the exodus to the big city and bring new life to an agonizing seat of culture.

We proposed to offer a course cum workshops for school teachers, in order to create awareness among them about the possibilities that the use of the computer would open to them, both as human beings, and as professionals of the transmission of knowledge.

The endeavour sprang from a humanistic point of view, by no means did we ever aim to create specialists in anything, the aim was to connect those responsible for the

future of the country, specially rural teachers, with a new force that was sweeping the world.

The local authorities agreed and supported the project, but surprisingly, it was thanks to the church, and the ecclesiastical authorities who graciously lent us the premises of the local madrassah (or seminary) that the lectures of the artist and the lessons of the instructors could take place.

We hired a few informaticians and a few primitive computers, so that elementary know how could be demonstrated and basic experience could be afforded to our students in a few days.

It was only about creating an awareness, a step that goes before information, when it is capacity building what you are aiming at, and certainly supersedes it, when you want real knowledge to be impacted.

At the end of the experience, I edited and wrote for a book with the title of "informatics and the teaching of humanities,"[1] which gathered the contributions of all the members of the team trying to answer to questions such as:

-what has the computer got to do with humanities and about the teaching thereof?

-what will be from now onwards the difference between the teacher and the student, how are their roles altered by the presence o the computer?

-Which are the dangers, problems and mistakes to avoid?

-What would be a proper use for the computer?

Etc....

Now, 23 years down the road, looking back onto that adventure, I think that some of the lessons we learned, duly processed by time, age and acculturation, could be of some kind of interest for those interested in lucid education and real culture in my new country, Pakistan.

I am writing for teachers who want to be honest with their pupils.

The Pakistani education system has to face an uneasy issue: the current need to maintain and keep the process of re-education and permanent training of the educators who have to train and equip Pakistani youth with survival skills to succeed in a rapidly transforming world. This is a world often unknown to the teachers themselves, as their age group has more often than not, neither experienced nor has developed an awareness of how radically computers have altered the handling of knowledge.

Eight warning or tenets should be kept in mind:

1. Primary and secondary school teachers process the future of the country, as all Pakistanis are supposed to experience such an education, which is not the case of tertiary or university education.

2. Secondary school teachers find themselves helpless in front of students who are more or better initiated into the use of the computer, and are overwhelmed by the arrival of new equipment whose educational output they do not dare to guarantee.

3. The personal experience of the educators alone is no longer relevant in order to prepare children to bloom and to fight for themselves in a computer served reality.

4. Personal experience is doubtless irreplaceable, but now it can also be simulated and become doubly useful thanks to the computer which can reinforce and multiply it.

5. New methods are here to create and to teach, new things, too.

6. Some years ago, when we organized the course for school teachers about "computers and the teaching

of humanities" in Spain, the response of the teachers surpassed any expectations. People seem to be well aware that a blind race for the acquisition of computer hardware, both in the private and the public sector can turn into mere tin mongering, if we do not develop new approaches and new skills, if we do not apply fresh ideas for their use.

7. Differentiating culture consumption and cultural production are what we are aiming at; both are very far from cultural consumerism.

8. From a humanistic, and also from a humanitarian point of view, education and culture cannot and should not be separated.

The arrival of computer literacy, is yet another step of the history of writing, which is the history of mankind, whatever old fashioned historians may say (which, in post-deconstructionist terms, means: ethnocentric, logocentric, linear, relativistic and evolutionistic historians, i.e.: shortcomings that the west has exported to other cultures that need not suffer from them).

The arrival of the printing and printed books in the 15th century proposed a new type of culture in Europe as with the spread of the printed word, the arts, power, bureaucracy, teaching, commerce, translation, nationalism. …etc. Quantity, whether we like it or not, is able to change quality.

This first "literacy revolution" hit mainly the West; the current "literacy revolution" that the computers have brought about concerns all cultures and all countries.

The computer, like the printer did before, is increasing the accessibility of information and the possibilities of communication and it is also multiplying our capacity to store and handle them.

Writing is a device through which information and communication can survive the man who thought them both, initiating thus a process of accumulation of data which is independent of the human voice, speech and presence, the real concern according to J. Derrida[2] of western logocentrism.

The printed book, changed history of thought because it offers to everyone the possibility, without really bestowing it of enjoying a meaningful absence, "one can be read"....

And what is a computer but "a machine that can write by itself, on its own"?

The aspect of this computer literacy phenomenon that we are interested in for educational purposes, is the birth of a new language to portray and transmit knowledge owed to new ways of organizing and approaching it.

Computers are not only a powerful tool which frees men from mechanical, repetitive and non creative tasks, leaving him naked and helpless in face of his own creativity, the computer is also a method.

Let us have a look to the features of this new epistemology that computers are proposing, and mind you, it is not a novelty, it is rather a come back, or a return to forgotten ways.

Let us see how does this bear on the "arche" (origin, beginning, power, source of might: the same Greek lexeme we find in all descriptions of power systems: monarchy, oligarchy, anarchy...) of science, on academic order and on some aspects of theory of knowledge that are now being questioned. We should not forget that this Greek "arche" became the root of the Roman, and later western "archivum": archives were the see of documents and power, and a symbol of might.

An archive is and was a store of files....what else does the computer do?

In any case both did and do empower.

Let us examine a reality being born under our eyes in Pakistan, and that many other countries had to take into account some time ago: the "managerial world": a world where everybody can make big decisions without much ado.

An example will suffice: until a few years ago (one should not forget that the pocket calculator only appeared in 1970) buying an intercontinental air ticket meant a long procedure and a series of different steps at different times, we had to wait several days for a confirmation that would reach us thanks to the successive inputs of numerous workers in several countries. Nowadays, in a single step, an employee without further studies can take, in front of his or her screen, without asking anybody anything, decisions of international consequences. This is happening because information has become the great legitimiser, the more there is the greater its legitimizing power, "it cannot go wrong". That is why it is now at the core of all power struggles, and its danger thereof; we have to accept that we may go to a travel agent, say in Hong Kong, and discover that the office computer can produce instantly the whole of the flying biography of any Pakistani person, with even the name and the telex number of the local agent where the whole process started: and you can apply this power to almost all realms of life. Some contend that it is indeed all departments of life that are concerned.

Watch it: in some British primary schools n the late seventies, and beginning of the eighties already, children had lots of fun in their history classes thanks to a clever program based on the census carried out during the last century in their own cities: thus, very young children rebuilt streets, families, shops; a simplified urban history, that is, but a game that happens to entail decisions and tasks

that until very recently would have kept the department of demographic history of any faculty, busy for a good number of months. There are big dangers as well: a computer program is generated by human beings and therefore contains, always, some kind of more or less subliminal ideology. It becomes then easy to induce a young population of decision makers to adopt certain decisions ....unless their critical sense has been educated and warned by those who were their teachers.

In order to enable our present students to fend for themselves in a world where more and more people keep an active control over their own lives, we have, more than ever to help the students to acquire a high level method of thinking: it is not enough any more to instruct them by transmitting data and telling them almost what hey are supposed to think, nowadays in the computer age, any passerby is in a managerial position, the street will actually be full or managers. Therefore our youth has to be trained for new teamwork and new social relationships springing out of a society that will have more and more time to spare, but they will have also to receive lessons about how to govern and how to pilot.

We teachers have to help them and make sure that our students who will live in a world where each person is a cell of power, are good at it.

The dissemination facilitated by the Gutenberg printing press, in the 15th century, already forced the sages of western civilizations to acknowledge that it was impossible for a single person to have read anything published about his or her specialty, education was out.

Today referential knowledge is pushing more and more to the side substantial knowledge (or the old Mister Know All by heart within his head) which only applies to very specialized precincts of science.

The privilege of erudition is therefore gone forever. "Being much older 'is not a guarantee anymore for greater information, given that is within reach of tasks for it by pressing a key in the computer keyboard.

All linear mechanical knowledge that you can learn by heart is left to the computer machine. The humanist or the well educated person will only have to use the qualifying side of his or her memory, that most human, and the most difficult. He or she has no choice but to be deeply human, mechanical inferences, knee-jerk reactions, lack of feeling, belong, and are better left to the computer.

Maybe, if we are lucky and work hard as teachers and educationists, the elderly, those living archives who used to enjoy respect time ago in the west during a less accumulative era, because of their high reference capacity, will be spared by cultural consumerism entailed by the use of computer technology.

What will be then the difference between the teacher and the pupil?

How will we describe advancement in knowledge?

A quarrel is in the offing between the old-fashioned and the fashionable that can oppose teachers and students who are differently equipped for dialogue. There is a hair breadth between lack of understanding and aggressiveness.

The generation gap may become deeper, because it might also become the gap between the able and the disabled. The "able" of our times will be the youngsters who will complete a secondary education in which the use of computers has been part of their student lives. Adults in a professional age (their teachers, for example) have all the chances of becoming progressively "unskilled" while the new technologies keep their ineluctable development.

It seems that, given the availability, continuous decrease of the price of the machine which increases the

outreach of our brain, and the existence, because of unemployment and other reasons that I cannot describe here, of perpetual leisure time or of what some call "negotiable time" (time that each person has to decide how to fill and how to optimize), we may have to create new institutions in order to replace the work place where time ago man's gregarious needs where solved; and we may well have to switch to postfigurative systems of education. Thus also the school may have to alter the image it has of its mission as an educational institution.

The teacher is of no use anymore if he just transmits information; he has to teach how to organize it, he has to become a coach for acts of knowledge.

This does not mean that all teachers will have to change their methods; many of them have stuck to and are still keeping a pluridimensional and holistic approach since antiquity. The inescapable truth, now, is that the teacher has to integrate and play the "role of the author" that the philosopher Foucault[3] described as "the creation of a space in which the subject disappears constantly; the author (the teacher) represents the principle of saving in the midst of the proliferation of meanings", and the new technologies can be very useful to fulfill this aim.

The main features of this new approach and of this "economics of meaning" could be:

1- Quantity becomes quality: out of a multitude of data, and precisely because of their sheer quantity, meanings emerge, new facts, new assessments leading to….very different decisions.

2- Non-evolutionism that we have already seen, finally we can do without the positivist ideal of a "Progress' coined in the 19th century. Knowledge does not evolve in along a linear path.

3- Non-linearity: science can not just follow the same and single path anymore.

4- Geopolitical and ethnological centrifugation: by now everybody has understood that "western knowledge" alone is not enough. The continuous cross-reference procedure that the computer allows for, dismantles the ethnocentricity, whether subliminal or not, of western anthropology, even for those who are not in the "deconstructive" mood and do not care for Derrida and his seminal deconstruction[4] which has brought about a new "orientalism" and a new reading of the west by the west.

The computer and the kind of thinking it fosters can be instrumental for so called third world countries to stop being so, and in a dignified manner, to their own eyes and to those of the rest of the so called "developed" world.

5- Language and countries become independent of the logocentric[5] rhetoric of presence. We knew that, but now it is terribly obvious that nobody is indispensable.

The use of the computer is shaping the need for an ethic of absence and of the availability or denial of presence that requires consideration.

6- A possibilistic and non-deterministic approach to history. The man of the 21st century does not see himself within history as a product, but as a producer in continuous relationship with the environment. The man of today knows that he is not a mere result of the environment, and is painfully learning that it may be the other way around[6].

7- He who knows where science is located, is close to mastering it" is a very old saying which now becomes alive, when we talk about cloud sciences, non closed sciences, always interdisciplinary and not totalitarian sciences, or about our personal

sciences only held together by the wake of our surfing the internet.

We need maps of science or people proficient in knowledge for the less trained minds. These mappers one of the many new jobs that the new technologies bring about, are scarce, but a real need, specially in the developing countries, where the Higher Education Commission should take deadly seriously the formation and training of librarians, documentists, library scientists and archivists. Only then will we have safe knowledge and safe instruction for primary education teachers who will enlighten the future of the country, and also, its higher education.

8- The number of computers available in the country is a non issue until we train these geographers of knowledge. As a matter of fact, the indiscriminate acquisition of computers might backfire, and we would have to put up with Jonathan Swift's corrosive irony ("travels into several remote nations of the world", London, 1726) as the inhabitants of the kingdom of Laputa had to when during his fabulous travel, Gulliver found the first example of CAL (Computer Assisted Learning) we know of. Gulliver had to criticize unmercifully the use of new technologies as direct substitutes of old methods; he taught us that new technology exacts new approaches and new ways.

We cannot help but recall the almost general failure of language   laboratories in the western world. They were massively purchased, during the   50's   and   the   60's according to behaviorist theories and to some kind of linguistic structuralism. A lot was invested in facilities but very little in "software", and, what it is still now, used by groups of more than twenty students, stuck together in the same room, doing the same   tasks,   together at the same time, at the same time of the day, every week.

9- Teachers have to become aware that in order to govern the computer and to guide all these budding managers who are roaming around, one has to face and dare to do a more difficult task: establishing facts. It is not about listing the facts like in old Sanskrit treatises, but about rebuilding them in front of the students and showing or describing their structure (some would say "deconstruct them"; "explained" is out, and for good mathematical reasons) and not just give examples of a hypothesis. Following J.Starobinsky[7], we cannot resist the temptation to recall that old cinematographic scene in which Groucho Marx, acting as an employee of a big department store, wriggles under the counter in order to cut out of the skirt of the client, the sample of the fabric that she is asking for and that she wants to be similar to the material of the dress she is wearing…..thus, very often, we accept as a demonstration a non iterative repetition, uttered in other words. We are impressed by the hypothesis being confirmed, when actually it has only been repeated in the tone of an explanation: such is not an act of knowledge. One has to make the student see not just accept, gulp and memorise. After "seeing" the effort of memorizing becomes redundant, the student should describe his grasping with his or her own words…..excepted when the beauty of a classic formulation deserves mnemonic acquisition and its enjoyment. The computer can be a great help to make the students "see' and trace the newly grasped fact, alive.

10- All this does not mean that we have to change every thing…many teachers will have to keep on doing what they have been doing, and teaching as traditionally as ever. The good use of the computer is leading us, after a long detour through flashy modernity, to the old ways of the old sages that

shone in every civilization and to the awareness that the great poets, and the great classics are even more needed today, both for the upbringing of the mind, and for keeping the figure and the contours of language in good shape and state of fitness. Such need is even more peremptory in a university devoted to languages, and in a country suffering language identity problems like Pakistan.

Here are some tips for educationists in Pakistan:

We have to try to make good pilots (cybernetics, one of the first names given to knowledge being developed around computers and computer science, has its root in cyber, (which in Greek meant "pilot") we have to give them the tools of good governance, and the desire for high standards.

Learning which is only passive, exclusively receptive, will not be enough, it will not enable the students to tackle the needs of a rapidly changing society that will ask, and is already asking for a "recurrent" education for all its members, enabling them to perform the new jobs that are and will spring out constantly.

Teaching at all levels will become the core activity of all public systems. Thus, instead of worrying about fitting people into already existing jobs, empowering and equipping people in order to create their own job, when necessary, will be the aim.

If we take the computer as a mere tool for instruction, as an inferior substitute of the teacher for tests and repetitive exercises, we will be wasting its possibilities for more creative learning, with much more creative teamwork and shared responsibilities. It will not be the computers' fault, neither will "the system" have to be blamed; it will rather be a dishonor for the teacher.

In the west, more and more people are choosing the option of flexible working from home thanks to the

computer.[8] This option is particularly interesting for Pakistani women, who would thus collaborate in the growth of their country and provide for their own wellbeing and of their families without disturbing the mores of the more traditional segments of society. Many women could become the mappers of knowledge and information consultants for teachers and lay persons in their villages, from a small center of documentation that the state should open and maintain in every small urban settlement, to start with, maybe as an appendage to the school or the madrassah.

In Pakistan many youngsters are jumping directly from total illiteracy to computer use, and some kind of tutoring or guidance should be made available.[9]

All teachers have to become wardens and curators, to help the country find its way through this crucial period; we have to work so that Pakistani culture comes out of it empowered, and not colonized.

Pakistani brains can and should produce software, especially when it is the education of Pakistani pupils which is at stake. Translations will have to be made, and offered translations will have to be revised, as all offers are not always that generous. Translation means much more than translating only from English. Because of its polarization onto the English language, Pakistan is missing many opportunities and availabilities free of charge.

After the Second World War, Japan totally in shambles and destroyed, created a ministry of translation where all the significant scientific research and discoveries in the world where monitored and translated, when deemed necessary. Yes, the rebirth of Japan from its ashes comes not from translating, but from the deep and true meaning of the verb to translate: to transpose knowledge and information into another language, so that it becomes operative, understandable and usable within the culture and the environment of the target language. A proper

translation, addresses also the "possible world" or system of expectations, according to Pragmatics, the most successful offspring of Textlinguistics of the target culture.[10] A good translation can bear on the reality of the target country without producing a blind imitation; just like the authors of drama the good translator produces a new, inspiring, enabling and empowering reality.[11]

NUML (National University of Modern Languages) could do the job of the above mentioned ministry of translation and, moreover, also diversify and enrich the number of sources and stop the English monographic restaurant with a single monodromic menu that Pakistani education has become.

For some scientific disciplines, English has become the international Lingua Franca, let us use it, but it is not the case when we address the realm of humanities, where a lot of havoc has been caused by the clumsiness of English language to carry accuracy within abstractions, especially when it is used as it is generally the case, by non native English speakers.

Teachers of humanities have to fight against "detextualization" which is what Jonathan Swift was afraid of when his Gulliver saw the "CAL" used in Laputa; this phenomenon is fostered by minds who are informed but have no "form" and have not been formed enough (remember, that forma, in Latin, means beauty with all its externalities and systems of relationships). These minds have not realized that in the history of humanities the "good" is communication, not information.

These minds are busy eliminating systematically all "noise" from all messages ("noise" in the computer world meaning of parasite, non immediately useful information), stealing all connotations and leaving an orphaned, denotative world.

That is why new teachers have to inform the young minds about meaning economics, how to save, how to invest, how to censure, how to respect, how to rescue specially, dying or wounded meanings. Information is not communication.

The mathematician Rene Thom[12] would call it "a pregnancy to be peeled, leaf, to be exfoliated: it is the communication without recognizable information, that we know, we do feel, that is there, inside.

Not being able to understand something, does not mean that this something is discardable "noise".

A lot of possible enlightenment goes to the waste paper basket in the blind race to hoard information, and a lot of able minds are wasted in processing this secondary ingredient of knowledge.

Finally we have to assume that the new language that the computer is suggesting, a language whose signifiers do not symbolize simple referents but acts of knowledge, and moves of knowledge, will inspire knowledgeable choreographies, and can therefore acquire an artistic dimension. We could even talk about knowledge meter, prosody and stylistics.

And, for those who are still afraid of the machine-who-will-eat-up-mankind and of mechanistic dehumanize-ation, let my apply a reassuring old, allopathic and classic poultice:

An Aidic and not Rapsodic at all, age is coming for the world of teachers. Many thinkers have pointed to the fact that cultures go through cycles,[13] thus education and the arts seem to go through concave, dark, repetitive periods, called "rhapsodic" (the "rhapsodes" were the storytellers who used to go from village to village earning their lives with the same show, in classical Greece) and culture does also go through convex, creative, bright as a genius or "Aidic" times (the "Aidics" were truly admired

poets in classical Greece) in an alternate manner, establishing thus a sequence of cycles which in the philosophy of history was for some time called "Kondratieff cycles".

An Aidic opportunity is being offered to all teachers, educationists and curators of culture, who are not happy with the educational status quo which is bound to a grimmer future if the switch to another mode of production is not initiated now.

Many would keep things as they are. It is easier and it would keep their social superiority and privileges while hardening the plight of those habitually disinherited.

For those who are really into knowledge, education and culture, humanists, in general, with all its consequences, it will be a big liability to lose such a passport.

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Assessment of Secondary School Examination in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to evaluate the Secondary School Certificate Examination and to find out the areas of trouble in the examination for class X. The purpose was also to find out the research topics and "key questions" for the coming researches. Twenty experts were selected from the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education in Pakistan. Moreover, thirty Scholars doing their M.Phil (Education) and Ph.D. (Education) in Islamabad and associated with the examination of class X were also taken for the purpose of the data collection. The findings of the study show that the areas of trouble were paper-setting, conduct of the examination, paper marking and tabulation. The key questions have been given for the future research in the area of examination.

Introduction

Examination is one of the main problem areas of the education system. National Education Policy, 1978 observed that one of the fundamental reasons for the deterioration of educational standards has been the perpetual continuation of an obsolete system of external examinations which encouraged learning by rote and subjects the students to various stresses and strains. Public

Examination at the end of class X was planned to be gradually substituted by internal system of evaluation by this Policy of 1978. National Education Policy 1992 recommended the establishment of National Testing Service (NTS) and expressed its concern on the examination system of the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education. Similar steps were proposed by all the education policies and still it continues to be one of the main areas of concern in the education system in Pakistan.

Statement of the problem

This study was designed to evaluate the examination system for the secondary school students and to find out the main areas of trouble in the examination system for class X. The purpose of the study was also to find out the topics for research in this area and to specifically identify the "key questions" which need to be answered by the coming researches.

Objectives of the Study

Specific objectives of the study were

1. to evaluate the examination system for the Secondary School Students at the end of Class X i.e. S.S.C. examination conducted by the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education in Pakistan;

2. to find out the specific problems in the conduct of this examination;

3. to identify the topics and key questions for the future researchers in the area of examination; and

4. to develop strategy for the solution of the problems in the S.S.C. examination.

Significance of the study

Examination system plays an important role in the identification of the worth of the individuals, before the students are given admission to higher education or before

they are assigned responsibilities in the practical life. In case the problems of the examination system are diagnosed and properly attended to, it is expected that the students may be given admission to higher education on merit and that the appointments of the persons may be made on the basis of social justice, with the resultant productive society and self sufficiency in the society

Methods and procedures of the study

Following procedures were adopted for the conduct of the study.

I   Interviewing 20 experts and officers working in Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Multan and Karachi.

II   Seminar of 30 M Phil (Education) and Ph D (Education) students who perform different duties in the examinations, conducted by Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Existing Practice of Evaluation in the School System

Before going further in the description of the survey part of the study, it looks appropriate to mention, in brief, the main features of examination process at classes V to X in Pakistan.

1. There are internal examinations for classes V, VI and VII.

2. At the end of class VIII, there is a public examination, named Middle Standard Examination conducted by the respective Directorates of Education. This examination is compulsory for those students who study in middle schools but it is not compulsory for the students of class VIII in secondary schools. Those who do not appear in the middle standard examination, appear in the class

VIII examination conducted by their respective secondary school.

3. Examination for classes X and XII are conducted by the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education.

4. The results of class X and XII examination are the main consideration for admission to higher education and for the purpose of employment.

Findings of the Study

The data collected from the experts on the examination system, provided the following weaknesses of the examination system.

1   The paper-setters keep in view only the course outlines but not the objectives of the course, hence the question papers cover only the content and encourage memorization.

2   The home tests are not the continuous phenomenon of the schools with the result that the students keep their studies pending up to the end of the academic year.

3   The papers are so set as to allow memorization and encourages elective studies. Most of the teachers help the students in guess work; this again encourages selective reading. This makes education itself a purposeless activity.

4   There is a number of defects in setting the papers. It is generally a one-man activity. No expert advice is obtained in paper setting and no moderation takes place because of the secrecy measures.

5   The papers are mostly subjective and essay type in nature and there is every likelihood of biases in marking which encourages injustice. However, Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education

have devised different ways for overcoming different types of injustice.

6 Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education in Pakistan have generally controlled the delays at different stages of examination. In this way, the results are declared within a period of two to three months.

7 It is revealed by all the respondents that the paper-setters keep in view only the course outlines, with a clear cognitive bias in the question paper. Very limited, in most of the cases, no coverage, is given to the comprehension and application type questions in the question paper.

8 The main problem-area in the examination system has been described as the S.S.C. and H.S.C. examinations. All the efforts of the students, parents, teachers and authorities are focused mainly on the intermediate examination in pre-medical and pre-engineering subjects, mainly because it is a door to higher professional education and brilliant career. Unfair means are used in a number of ways and efforts are made to increase the scores. The malpractices have specially brought defame to the whole examination system.

9 There are weaknesses in the marking of scripts and tabulation of the result. Special system needs to be devised to avoid discrepancies in these areas.

10 It has specially been recommended by the respondents that the following research studies be planned for this phase of education

a. Investigation into the malpractices used in the secondary and higher secondary school examinations conducted by the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education in

Pakistan and to come up with the strategy for the improvement of the situation.

b. Research studies for the investigation into the malpractice used in.

    i. Paper setting

    ii. Conduct of examination

    iii. Preparation of results, making of scripts and tabulation of results.

Questions to be answered by the Researchers

There is a need to get the answers to the following type of questions and to conduct research studies to get the answers to the following questions:

– What is the procedure of getting the papers set?

– Who sets the papers?

– What are the practices for the supervision of the papers marked before the results are tabulated?

– What is the procedure for getting the question papers printed, sealed and dispatched to the examination centers?

– What is the procedure of packing the question papers?

– How is the moderation of the question papers made? What is the procedure of seeing the compatibility of the question papers with the course outlines?

– What is the procedure of designing printing, dispatching and handling of the answer sheets before the conduct of the examination?

– What is the procedure of inspecting the examination hall?

- How are the appointments of supervisory staff, examiners and head examiners made?

- What is the procedure of sending the answer sheets (scripts) from the examination hall to the examiners?

- What is the procedure of preparing instruction for the examiners and sub-examiners?

- What are the arrangements for keeping the answer sheets in the boards after the marking ?

- What are the different systems of marking used by boards i.e. centralized marking etc.

- How are the award lists maintained in the secrecy branches?

- What is the process of tabulating the results?

- What is the re-checking procedure before and after the result is declared?

- What is the procedure of handling the cases regarding the use of unfair means in the examination hall?

Strategy Proposed for future

Following future strategy is proposed on the basis of responses of the interviewees:

1. Examination must be made a purposeful activity directly related to the objectives of education.

2. Papers be set by the teachers of prominence who have training and experience in paper-setting.

3. A mix of internal and external system of examination be introduced where possible. However, objective tests may be used by the classroom teachers as an essential part of continuous assessment.

4. Conduct of the examination be made under the supervision of strict teachers, who need to be provided proper security.

5. In order to avoid cheating in the examination halls, strict measures need to be adopted.

6. Banks of test items be established and computer be used to prepare different sets of question papers.

7. Marking of scripts be strictly secret and steps be adopted to avoid delays.

8. Continuous analysis of examination results be made in order to improve the text-books and teaching methods.

9. System of examination for the evaluation at the end of class IX and class X, be set once and it should continue for handsome period of time. No change of system is made without proper research work.

Recommendations for the coming researchers

1. Research studies for the investigation of malpractices generally used in the secondary and higher secondary schools conducted by the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education in Pakistan and development of a strategy for the improvement of the examination system.

2. Research studies be conducted for the investigation of malpractices in specific areas like paper setting, conducting examination, marking the scripts and tabulation of the results.

3. Research studies be made for the investigation of malpractices used in the intermediate examination in pre-medical and pre-engineering subjects and strategy be developed for its improvement.

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A Sexist Reading of Charles Dicken's

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ABSTRACT

Though feminism as a conscious movement in English Literature is a phenomenon of the 1960s, it is interesting to trace its signs even in a 19th century traditionalist like Charles Dickens. The present article explores the way he has manipulated both form and language in A Tale of Two Cities to record the class conflict of the French Revolution in terms of a sexist clash. The impression of a formally cognisable sexualised test is clear from the very beginning. The suppressed anger of an oppressed class gets transmitted into the brooding fury of an aggrieved woman who waits for the right moment before hitting back with a vengeance. Even before the Revolution, the male characters start receding into the background, giving way to this powerful woman. From now it is she who presides over all affairs, domestic as well as state. This subversion of hierarchy is registered at formal level through a replacement of male images by the female ones. The point to note here is that Dickens is not vindicating the excesses of one class or gender over the other. His tone is mainly admonitory. The plea is for a just and equitable set-up to minimise the possibility of abuse of power in any sphere of human life.

A Tale of Two Cities

For one thing, Charles Dickens is not known for any pronounced sexual or sexist concerns. While his contemporaries in France and Russia were challenging the norms of their respective societies by granting women both subjectivity and sexuality, he chose to remain non-transgressive and conformed to the bourgeois ethics of the Victorian England. A traditionalist, he worked in line with the picaresque mode – an essentially male-centred narrative in fiction that marginalized and/or stereotyped woman as a comic, pathetic or repulsive figure. Dicken's women, too, are cast in reductive roles. Either good or bad, they arouse no ambivalence in the reader's response. However, A Tale of Two Cities, being one of his later, mature works (1859), works out a reversal of gender positionalities. As the French Revolution gets underway, we get a growing sense of subversion of power politics at class as well as gender level.

The novel opens in a traditional fashion with an all-male cast. Women are included slowly and one by one. Lucie enters the plot as a typical romantic heroine "a short, slight, pretty figure [with] a quantity of golden hair, a pair of blue eyes [and] a little feminine nose the line of which was as delicate and fine as it was possible to be"(30).

Here is a 'little' woman, the phonetic connotation of whose name itself suggests somebody soft, supple and malleable. Notice here the description of a woman as a man would like her to be__ very good, very pretty but very lifeless 'a golden haired doll' (96). She is going to Paris "under [a] worthy gentleman's protection' (30) and when she curtsey to him, a male conventionalist Dickens adds significantly in parenthesis "(Young ladies made curtseys in those days)" (Ibid). There is no arousal of any erotic response as in case of Thomas Hardy's bold strokes of sexiness in the portrayal of Eustacia Vye (The Return of the Native) or Tess Durbeyfield (Tess of the d'Urbervilles).

Sexuality of a woman does not exist for Dickens. Counterfiguring this goody-goody, sexless object of male worship and pursuit is Madame Defarge, the awesome Fury of a woman, who when once aroused to revenge, does not pause to look back. In between these two extreme pictures, both flattering to the male ego is Ms. Pross--- the ordinary mean figure of a spinster, humanized just because of her ordinariness. It is this 'strong woman' who 'lays a brawny hand upon [Mr Larry's] chest and sends him flying back against the nearest wall' (35), leaving him with a breathless reflection that 'this must be a man' (Ibid). A strong woman indeed, but a mere comic figure.

This at the reader level. Upon a second glance we notice the text registering a sexual subversion __dethronement of man and empowerment of woman at the levels of character, form, language and structure. The fact is, where the Revolution works out a total upsetting of the socio-political order, disturbing the power-structure at the class-level, there it brings about a topsy-turvying of gender positions as well. The approximation is both literal and metaphorical. This the writer achieves mainly through his use of language, i.e. his semantic and semiotic mechanics. Of paramount help was his acquaintance with the French language which is highly gender-conscious, having each noun either masculinised (le) or femininised (la).

In Book First, men are given precedence in the narrative as well as action. Monsieur Defarge, the wine-shop owner is the first to be introduced as a man of strong resolution and set purpose.' (40). His description is *followed* by that of 'Madame Defarge, *his* wife' (40). She keeps on knitting, seeming to see nothing. At first, a typical female, furred, shawled and bejeweled,'sitting *behind* the counter' (Ibid). Her repeated 'grains of coughs' (41) remain unheeded by her lord and his co-mates. He is the active leader of the resistance movement, forging an alliance with the fellow-Jacques. He leads Mr. Lorry and Lucie to

Dr Mannettes' garret, and then arranges the doctor's exit from France. But once the Jacques (nm) are organized, it is Mme Defarge who takes over the charge of the Jaquerie (nf), the party whose affairs she now presides over (167).

The pre-revolution France is a "class-society". Monseigneur, representing the patriarchal elite, is at the top along with his civil, military and ecclesiastical hierarchy. While the aristocracy is arrogant, inflated and oppressive, the commoners are docile and submissive. They suffer silently and endure in a female fashion all the tyrannies inflicted upon them. So, at the killing of Gaspard's son under Marquis' carriage, 'women were as silent as men' (116). Helpless, powerless; smouldering with a sense of wrong yet unable to raise a voice, let alone hit back. Initially, the language describing this political scenario is phallocentric. Throughout, a stress is laid on the 'maleness' of things. St. Antoine has a male entity 'a cloud settled on his sacred countenance (38). So do the two Lorqa-esque images of the Woodman and the Farmer on page 2, symbolizing Fate and Death. In predicting the revolution, Dickens here carefully avoids mentioning the female instrument of terror, 'la guillotine' which is central to the post-Revolution excesses. He reserves it for a later use. In Book the Second, Fate gets feminised, identified with Madame Defarge. She is 'one dark, stout woman' (117) who returns the Monseigneur's gaze. 'One woman who had stood conspicuous, knitting, still knitted with the steadfastness of Fate (Ibid). The connotation of knitting, too, undergoes a change. From the homely, creative activity of a housewife, it assumes a formidable proportion --- the fate of men being woven by a goddess. The Greek connections not only give Madame a heroic, mythological stature but also feminize the erstwhile male Fate. The image then fuses with the Furies pursuing the Marquis on his way to his country- chateau, (nm) a phallocentric stone-mansion symbolizing the deep-seated system of political oppression in France. The text records the journey

of 'Monseigneur in the country…as if he came attended by the Furies' (119) and then again 'escorted by the Furies' (122). The next chapter is significantly titled 'The Gorgon's Head.'

Now the Furies in Greek mythology are female powers of revenge and retribution from Tartarus. Besides being externally visible pursuing Orestes, these punitive deities also symbolize the sense of guilt that the matricide is haunted by in Aeschylus' The Eumenides. Dickens has little or no internal action in his world. So the Gorgon certainly gets embodied in the person of Madame Defarge. With the monseigneur as the first of her long line of victims, she comes to represent the suppressed anger of the poor class robbed of its basic human rights at the hands of a tyrannical aristocracy. And nothing could have captured more vividly the tyrant-victim binary opposition in France than the male-female power-politics at inter-gender and intra-familial levels in the wine-shop of St. Antoine.

Lady Gregory has described revolution as a time "when the small rise up and the big fall down". So a community, giving itself up to retaliative violence registers a parallel change in its sexual position. Man the ruler is displaced by women the ruled who now assumes the patriarchal role of managing business as well as political affairs, excelling him in both his fields. "The master of the wine-shop was not visible" (167). In his stead was seen only "Madame Defarge in her seat, presiding over the distribution of wine". (Ibid). If the distribution of wine is a metaphor for charging men and women with a passion for justice, the Madame is discharging this duty most efficiently. 'Still Knitting' is a superb example of how language, syntax, form and structure, everything reinforces the reversal of man-woman role. All the mechanics of language are employed to maximize the effect of this change. The chapter begins with 'Madame Defarge and Monsieur Defarge, her husband…" (177). In contrast to an

earlier report, the narrative has reversed the order of precedence. Inside the wine-ship, Madame has one eye on business and another on her husband. Nothing escapes her as 'she immediately took her post at her desk, counted the money, examined the stock, went through the entries in the book, made other entries of her own, checked the serving man in every possible way and finally dismissed him to bed.. All this while, Defarge with his pipe in his mouth, walked up and down, complacently admiring but never interfering; in which condition, indeed, as to the business and his domestic affairs, he walked up and down through life.'(179).All the verbs connote singular command, power and authority of the woman whose actions are being narrated.

The scene is reminiscent of Macbeth when Lady Macbeth chastises her lord with the venom of her tongue. (Act-I, Sc VII).In response to Defarge's stress on immediate action, notice the variation in Madame's tone and accent. She charges him of a weak heart: 'You are faint of heart tonight.' (179); mutters in disgust. 'Oh, the men, the men!' (Ibid); mocks and mimicks him: 'my dear' (Ibid); repeats his statement in a rhetorical question: 'And when is it not a long time?' (Ibid) She chides as much as explains and advises. Her shift from 'you' to 'thee' in 'I tell thee...' (180) is very important. It is expressive of a coup d'etat; an assumption of a superior, commanding position as he subsides to a subordinate role. A half-complaining, half-apologetic Defarge is 'standing before her with his head a little bent, and his hands clasped at his back like a docile and attentive pupil before his catechist.' (Ibid) 'My brave wife' (Ibid) he interjects as he later exclaims: 'A strong woman, "a great woman, a frightfully grand woman" (187).This is like Macbeth's admiration for his wife: "Bring forth men-children only." Her body language, too, is self-expletive. She speaks with 'her extended hand in strong action (180). Equally clear is the violence of language describing her act of tying money in her

handkerchief. 'She tied a knot as if it throttled a foe.... Striking her little counter with her chain of money as if she knocked its brains out' (181). The lava is ready to erupt yet is duly held in check. This is what she has advised her husband to do: be patient and wait for the right moment. The subversion of the domestic hierarchy is complete when winding up the days business and debate, it is this 'admirable woman' who announces that it is time to go to bed and leads her husband thereto.

So complete is the take-over of a male St. Antoine by a female that Defarge becomes a non-entity. 'Nobody missed Defarge, nobody asked for him, nobody wondered to see only Madame in her seat...' (167). She is flawless in planning and execution. Her handling of John Barsad the spy is superb in contrast to Defarge who nearly betrays himself. While he smoked at his door, looking after her with admiration,' she goes 'from place to place and from group to group, a missionary' (186), infusing her fellow-women with a formidable purpose ; so they, too, are found knitting, with a dreadful pun on 'knitting, counting dropping head' (187). From a leader of women, she becomes a leader for all, men and women, having Defarge, Jacques III and Vengeance at her beck and call.

At the fall of the Bastille even when Defarge is leading the enraged crowd, he looks for his wife and she, 'composed as ever, but not knitting today, Madam's resolute right hand was occupied with an axe in place of the usual softer implements and in her girdle were a pistol and a cruel knife' (214). Axe, pistol and knife, these pointed phallic symbols are used with reference to a woman. The change in equipment reinforces a change in her position. She has taken up the masculine role. Her knife is said to be cruel. The fact is, when it comes to taking revenge, women strike with a double force. Throughout, the idea of revenge being female is superimposed. So vehement is the vengeful fury that a new female figure Vengeance emerges on the

scene. Though an extension of Madame herself, she symbolizes the revenge motive that becomes so dominant as to be concretized in a separate woman. When the suppressed energy is broken loose, men only kill while women mutilate and inflict brutalities on the dead bodies. 'Women were a sight to chill, the boldest. (221). This is because men are oppressed by the sociopolitical system alone whereas women are doubly oppressed by the system and men, hence more keen in seeking revenge and more formidable in executing it. So behind Madame's act of disgracing the governor's body is not only her personal anger but also the rage of a whole race, generated by the wrong done to a sister: 'she put her foot upon his neck and with her cruel knife LONG ready hewed off his head' (218.My caps).

The fall of the Bastille is followed by the burning of the Monseigneur's château. This symbolizes the demolition of the patriarchy that it housed. The class-gender edifice has crumbled down. With the acceleration of the pace of violence, female images multiply in contrast to the male has ones used earlier. The two prison houses Darnay kept are named la Force (253) and la Conciergerie (339). The post-revolution mass hysteria is concentrated in 'that sharp female newly born called la Guilllotine' (251). In the reign of Terror, this fiendish device becomes synonymous with the land itself:

'How goes the republic?(nf)

You mean la guillotine?(nf) (307).

The land of France (nf) has become an angry, voracious goddess to be propitiated with human blood. Thus the vindictive fury of an oppressed class is most befittingly femininised because of its having remained buried for such a long time and now erupting with the full force of an aggrieved oppressed female.

Then comes the climactic reading of Dr. Mannette's letter. Nowhere is the analogy between class and gender more emphatically pronounced than now. Notice the multiple implications of the two parties in clash now changing places:

The ruling elite	Vs	The labouring class
Monseigneur the Marquis	Vs	The peasant woman
Man, the powerful aggressor and rapist	Vs	Woman, the powerless victim of rape

The rape of a poor woman is equivalent to the rape of a class. An act, totally disempowering the victim, it is a metaphor for the human rights violation that the poor were subjected to in France. The shattered woman is reported to utter piercing cries. 'My husband, my father and my brother'. (316). One is reminded of Maya's cry in her anguish in Anita Desai's Cry the Peacock" Father! Brother! Husband! Who is my saviour? I am in need of one. (98). The three men are the supposed props and protectors of a woman in a conventional society. The rape victims' counting up to twelve is suggestive of the zero-hour, the turn of the next day. So the incident deliberately kept off by Dickens till the end, marks the birth-day of the counter-movement in France. The unchecked crimes of one class incur and perpetuate violence in return. The Doctors' letter completes the cycle of the class conflict conveyed in terms of the gender-clash. It is this 'brooding sense of wrong' (258) that have given Madame Defarge's knife an added edge. It was 'imbued from her childhood along with an inveterate hatred of a class that developed her into a tigress' (Ibid). It caused the birth in Yeats' words, of 'a terrible beauty' --- (Easter 1916, l.16) 'that kind of beauty which not only seems to impart to its possessor firmness and animosity but strike into others an instinctive recognition of

those qualities'. (252). The change in leadership from Monseigneur to the common serfs, from monsieur to Madame Defarge is what defines the French Revolution. Defarge has dwindled into 'a weak minority' (334) before fading out completely. The last party meeting is held under Madame at a changed venue where he is conspicuous through his absence. Who knows he might be her next victim. For his loyalty to her cause is already suspected because of his weak support of the Doctor and his family:

'Well, well, 'reasoned Defarge, but one must stop somewhere'. After all the question is still where?

'At extermination' said Madame (332-3)

There is no man stopping this woman form her ruthless course. It lies in the hands of another woman, Ms Pross, 'who too, was a determined woman in a different way; a tight, hard, wiry woman... as Mr Lorry had seen in the same figure a woman with a strong hand in the years gone by' (358).

A Tale of Two Cities is said to have a feminine structure. Its movement from the slumberous to the enraged connotes the potential dangers of a woman's silent endurance. So a sleepy St. Antoine is temporarily awakened to a Bacchic revelry, then relapses into inactivity only to be re-awakened in a mad frenzy of violence. The effect is attained through the recurrent image of a sea in calm, its surge and swerve and then the resultant destruction. The text's division into three books represents the calm before the storm, the storm itself and then the terrible after-math. This is akin to the movement in the Indian poet Daruwala's 'Ghagra in Spate' a poem imbued with unmistakable feminist consciousness.

The interplay of male and female images, their respective positions and dominance or subservience during the revolution build up a coherent structure besides giving unity to the plot at sexual, textual and contextual levels.

Apart from being an important historical document, A Tale Two Cities addresses same of the unconscious feminist concerns of Dickens the artist. He was a conscious Victorian who showed a clear understanding of the French situation: the vicious cycle of how tyranny breeds fear, fear hatred and hatred an even worse form of tyranny. The aim was to shake his prudish English audience out of their complacency regarding the politics of another country, be it of class or gender:

> *Sow the same seed of rapacious license and oppression over again and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind. (362).*

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Assimilation: A Fluency Tool

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ABSTRACT

1. *Assimilation is an interesting linguistic (phonological) phenomenon which can be observed all around us. It is one of the chief characteristics of the spoken aspect of language and is exploited by almost every speaker in order to accelerate his speech. Although it is a chief feature of speech, a few assimilated words and phrases can be seen in the written form of a language as well, especially in the commercial use of it.*

    In this process, a word or phrase loses its historically recognized shape. In other words, its orthographic status is nullified for example, the Punjabi word (though not very commonly used) 'phulti' is an assimilated form of 'phool hutti' (flower shop); the English word 'rek coat' is the assimilated version of 'red coat'; and the Urdu word 'baach cheet' (chatting) is the assimilated shape of 'baat cheet'.

2. *The main reason behind the production of assimilated words and phrases is the economy-of-effort factor. Articulatorily speaking, certain organs of speech, while producing a word or phrase,*

suddenly change their route in order to produce that word or phrase more easily.

3. *Assimilation follows certain rules but the native speakers of a language use it without being conscious of those rules. The non-native speakers of a language, on the other hand, have to learn those rules (while learning the language) in order to exploit such fluency enhancing phenomena.*

4. *In the connected speech of a speaker both consonantal and vocalic assimilations can be observed. The former takes place within a single word as well as in a phrase, whereas the latter mainly occurs within a word. Three types of phrasal assimilation can be observed in terms of direction.*

5. *The main aim of this research article is to discuss assimilation from various angles besides discussing its different established types and their reasons, especially in English.*

Introduction

Assimilation is a phonological process. It is one of the distinctive features of connected speech. It is the partial negation of the orthographic status of a word and it either reduces or completely destroys the phonemic distinctions which are very much present in the regular forms of words in isolation. Assimilation leads to different types of phonological modification, rendering the word semantically more difficult to understand, especially for non-native speakers. It is a natural process that certain sounds have phonic affinity with each other. Therefore, it is easier to articulate these sounds after or before a sound that has phonic affinity and difficult to pronounce one that doesn't have that affinity or closeness. This may also vary from one linguistic group to another. For example, in some South Indian languages certain sounds fallow each other that may appear to be tongue twisters for speakers of other languages. The concept of assimilation contrasts with

dissimilation where sounds become less alike from each other with the passage of time. Crystal (1999) writes:

> "assimilation is the influence exercised by one sound upon the articulation of another, so that the sounds become more alike, or identical; the notion contrasts with dissimilation, where the sounds become less alike. The process is especially common in the study of sound change; for example, Latin 'noctem' (night) became Italian 'notte', with /k/ becoming /t/. In contemporary English usage, the /n/ in the phrase 'ten mugs' will in normal (i.e. reasonably fast) speed become /m/, because of the influence of the following sound. Several types of assimilation can be recognized in the analysis of every-day conversation"[1].

Since assimilation is a natural phonological phenomenon, though fairly difficult to explain, many linguists have tried to deal with it. A few linguists have explained it in a great detail. Daniel Jones is one such figure. He has discussed its different types and their reasons. Jones (1976) writes:

> "Assimilation is defined as the process of replacing a sound by another sound under the influence of a third sound which is near to it in the word or sentence… Assimilations are of two chief kinds, historical and contextual. By a 'historical assimilation' we mean an assimilation which has taken place in the course of development of a language, and by which a word which was once pronounced in a certain way came to be pronounced subsequently in another way. By a 'contextual assimilation' we mean one which is occasioned when words are juxtaposed in a sentence, or in the formation of compounds, and by which a word comes to have a pronunciation different from that which it has when said by itself.

> An example of historical assimilation is the change of m to n which has taken place in the word ant/ænt/.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries this was written amete and amte, and was no doubt pronounced 'æmətə' and (later) 'æmtə ' and 'æmt '; spellings with n in place of m first appeared in the fifteenth century, clearly indicating the change to the modern pronunciation /ænt/. An example of historical coalescent assimilation is the reduction of the sequence tj to the affricate tʃ in such a word as 'picture' / pɪktʃə / which some hundred of years ago was doubtless pronounced /pɪktjʊr/.

An example of contextual assimilation is the change of s to ʃ when 'horse' / hɔ:s / and 'shoe' / ʃu: /are put together and form horse-shoe / hɔ:ʃ ʃu: /. An example of contextual coalescent assimilation is when 'don't' /dəʊnt / and 'you' / ju: / are put together and pronounced /dəʊntʃʊ /, as is frequently done"[2].

A native speaker of any language can be observed using this connected-speech-aspect in his day-to-day communication. The use of such features makes speech difficult to communicate but easy to articulate and the native speaker is primarily concerned with the latter. The process of assimilation can be found in all languages since connected speech cannot be accelerated without using such fluency enhancing factors. Crystal (1999) states:

"besides exhibiting similarities in the features they use in structuring their sounds, languages also show other phonological similarities. For example, although the phonological systems of different languages are governed by different rules, the variation which occurs does, for the most part, fall within certain parameters. Similar phonological processes turn up, in language after language"[3].

If we carefully observe the languages spoken around us, we will come to realize that phenomena like assimilation are chiefly found in less careful speech. In a formal and careful speech their use is reduced to a great extent. That is why phonological processes like

assimilation, elision, clipping etc. are quite frequently used by so-called uneducated people like vendors, hawkers, bus conductors etc. Since assimilation is one of the chief features of connected speech, the frequency of its occurrence depends on the speed of a speaker's connected speech. In rapid and casual speech its occurrence is quite frequent. This often makes a word or a phrase difficult to understand. Giegerich (1992) believes:

> "the more casual or fast speech is, and the more an utterance deviates from the maximal clarity of citation forms, the greater is the role that the context plays in its comprehension"[4].

Reasons of Assimilation

In the process of assimilation a sound is modified because of the influence of its neighbouring sound. One of the results of this phonological influence of one sound on the other is the altered movement of articulators. Besides, the passage of air stream is also diverted depending on the factors like place of articulation, manner of articulation and nasality etc.

Articulatorily, assimilation leads to the ease-of-articulation, helping muscles become comparatively more relaxed. The use of assimilation makes the transition from one sound to another easier because of the removal of any possible articulatory hurdles. For example, when the phrase 'good boy' is assimilated as 'goob boy', the tongue does not need to move towards the alveolar ridge in order to pronounce the / d / sound in 'good' as the / d / of 'good' changes into the bilabial due to the influence of the first sound (that is bilabial) of the following word 'boy'. As a result, the laminal muscle keeps relaxing and does not move at all for any alveolar consonantal articulation.

In order for assimilation to take place in a phrase the phonemic distance is of very vital importance. It takes place when two sounds in a phrase are closely placed, one

followed by the other without having any other vowel or consonant sound between them. These sounds placed at the morpheme boundary can be:

a) Both consonants;

b) One vowel and the other consonant;

c) Both vowels

Owing to this reason, assimilation takes place between the last sound of the first word and the first sound of the second/last word of the phrase.

Another interesting aspect of assimilation is that, in a phrase, it is the result of consonantal interplay; vocalic interaction does not play much role in this process though indirect influence of the vowel sounds is very much there. However, vocalic assimilation can take place within a word. Mainly, consonants get affected in this process because of the fact that they are at times difficult to produce. Its main reason is that it needs at least two articulators to produce a consonant sound, one active and the other passive. So, in order to articulate consonants, more muscular (supralaryngeal) activity and involvement within the vocal cavity is needed. Naturally, the sounds that are hard to produce in connected speech are modified or replaced by the neighbouring sounds so as to avoid a too rigorous muscular activity. As a result, the speed of connected speech gets accelerated and the speaker feels phonologically at ease too.

So, by observing this phenomenon closely it can be claimed that assimilation is a natural linguistic process that is not an outcome of any conscious effort on the part of the speaker. It is an inherent feature of languages and keeps them mobile and dynamic.

Assimilation does not take place randomly. It definitely follows certain rules. In other words, it occurs in particular phonetic environments. It means we can not

assimilate any word or phrase we wish to. Conversely, there are certain sounds at the word boundaries that trigger off this process. Assimilation takes place when an alveolar sound is followed by a bilabial sound, e.g. 'ten bikes' → / tem baɪks /; when an alveolar sound is followed by a velar sound, e.g. 'red carpet' → / rek ka:pɪt /; when an alveolar sound is followed by a palatal sound, e.g. 'last year' → / la:ʃ jɜ: /; when an alveolar sound is followed by another alveolar sound e.g. 'good luck' → / gʊl lʌk / and when a bilabial sound is followed by a labiodental sound, for example 'gap filling' → / gæf fɪlɪŋ/.

Types of Assimilation

In terms of direction, assimilation can be divided into three types. These types can be observed in many other languages too but this research article will focus mainly on English, though a few examples will be quoted from Urdu too.

If we compare the features of connected speech in both the languages, we will come to realize that in English language their use is more frequent. Three types of assimilation are given below:

a) When a sound is affected by the following sound, it is called regressive assimilation, e.g. 'ten bulls' → / tem bʊlz /. This type can be found in Urdu too. An example for this is 'dust darazi' → 'dusd darazi'. Another example is 'moong phalli' (pea nut) → 'mom phalli'.

b) When a sound is affected because of the influence of the preceding sound, it is called progressive assimilation. It is also called preservative assimilation, e.g. 'Goodge street' → / gʊdʒ ʃtri:t /. In Urdu, the example for this type is 'tukhme balanga' (the seed of balanga plant) → 'tukh malanga'.

c) When two sounds affect each other, thus producing a new sound. This type is called reciprocal or coalescent assimilation. The assimilatory effect here is bidirectional. In English an example of this type is 'would you'→ / wʊdʒʊ /. Unluckily, the researcher was not able to find any example of reciprocal assimilation in Urdu (but it doesn't mean that this type does not exist in Urdu).

Assimilation can be partial as well as complete. It is called partial when a sound changes to another sound because of the influence of its neighbouring sound. In the phrase 'ten bikes' / tem baɪks / e.g. the assimilation is partial because the alveolar / n / of 'ten' has changed or modified its phonological status into the bilabial / m / under the influence of the bilabial / b /. On the other hand, it would have been a complete assimilation if / n / of 'ten' had changed into / b / under the influence of the same bilabial. So, 'red card' → /rek ka:d/ is an example of complete assimilation. Todd & Hancock (1986) state:

> "complete assimilation of nasals often occurs when we have a cold, e.g.
>
> Come back → /kʌb bæk /
>
> Ten dogs → /ted dɒgz/"[5].

The complete assimilation in the above mentioned phrases has caused two types of phonological modification in these phrases. Firstly, the / m / of 'come' and the / n / of 'ten' have been changed into their following sounds, i.e. / b / and / d /. Secondly, the nasality of 'come' and 'ten' has changed into the quality those of the oral sounds. This change indicates that some times the first word of a phrase can modify its phonetic form in quite a complex way. So it can be claimed that the preceding words of the above mentioned phrases have undergone the conso-vocalic assimilation simultaneously. With the occurrence of two

different types of assimilation in one word, the notion has become quite complex here. It can be termed dual assimilation.

When a sound completely loses its phonemic distinction after having undergone the process of assimilation, such a change is also referred to as phonemic assimilation. On the other hand, if a sound changes partially so that it loses its pure form by giving way to one of its variant forms, such a modification is called allophonic assimilation.

Within a single word, both consonantal and vocalic assimilations can take place. A number of consonantal examples can be observed in the formation of the past forms of the regular English verbs. In English, there are three such endings, i.e. / t / as in 'marched' → / maːtʃt /; / d /as in 'played' → / pleɪd /; and / ɪd / as in 'printed' → / prɪntɪd /. In this situation, assimilation takes place because of the presence or absence of voice (the vibration in the vocal lips / cords). Similarly, single word consonantal assimilation can be observed in the formation of the plural forms of the regular English nouns and the third person singular in the present simple tense. Here, too, three endings can be observed, i.e. / s / as in 'books' → / bʊks / (noun + verb); / z / as in 'bags' → / bægz / (noun + verb); and / ɪz / as in 'judges' → / dʒʌdʒ ɪz / (noun + verb). This can be termed as voice assimilation. Katamba (1989) explains:

> "the plural suffix is realized by a voiced or voiceless alveolar fricative depending on whether the noun ends in a voiced or voiceless segment"[6]

Consonantal assimilation also involves the change in voicing in another way. In such a situation, a voiced sound is partially or fully devoiced (a small circle is used as a diacritic below the sound to show that it has become devoiced). In the words 'snap' and 'bib' we can observe 'n'

and the final 'b' (which are both voiced sounds) being partially and fully devoiced respectively. They can also be called the examples of voice assimilation. Luckily, the voice assimilation of this type does not create any semantic confusion because the presence or absence of the vibration in the vocal cords cannot cause any change so as to destroy the phonemic identity of a sound. Technically speaking, it is not a pure allophonic assimilation either because it is mainly the supralaryngeal articulatory movement which produces allophones of a phoneme whereas in the above mentioned words the main articulators are the vocal cords.

As regards the vocalic assimilation, it is mainly allophonic: the sound retains its phonemic status but is affected in terms of either nasality or quantity / length. In the word 'man', for example, the English oral vowel / æ / becomes nasalized because of its company (and it is truly said that a sound is known by the company it keeps). The same sound, however, remains unaffected in words like 'hat' and 'rag'. The change of quantity or duration takes place when a vowel sound changes its length. It becomes longer if it is followed by a voiced sound. In the word 'heed', for instance, / i: / will be realized longer than its counter part in 'heat'. Vocalically assimilated words usually remain very close to their citation forms. So, they are not deceptive (in some situations, they might be a little confusing) in terms of meanings as the semantic variation of a word depends on the phonetic modification of it.

One more interesting feature of vocalic assimilation is that, in most cases, it takes place due to the single vowels, though a few phrases like 'my father' and 'your house' can be heard in their assimilated forms where the diphthongs of 'my' and 'your' are reduced to schwa sound. So, it would not be wrong to claim that vocalic assimilation is mainly monophthongal in its nature. Diphthongs play a little role in this process whereas triphthongs seem to be inoperative here.

Since a word or a phrase is assimilated for articulatory reasons, it affects the movement of the tongue, lips and the velum or soft palate. As a result, the consonantal assimilation involves the change in the place of articulation, manner of articulation, palatalisation and labialization. The assimilated phrase / gʊb bɔɪz / involves the change in the place of articulation where the alveolar / d / of 'good' changes its place of articulation into that of the bilabial / b /. The word 'bottle' involves the change in the manner of articulation as the alveolar / t / is released laterally because of the following lateral sound. The articulation of 'keys' involves palatalisation because when a velar consonant is followed by a front vowel, mostly slight anticipatory fronting of the part of the tongue takes place. Consequently, the velar consonant is made partly in the palatal region due to the fronting. One more very important point is to be noticed here. As we know, in the production of the velar sounds (k, g, ŋ), it is the back of the tongue that plays the role of the active articulator (by getting higher) whereas the soft palate (velum) remains passive. But in the case of palatalisation two interesting articulatory moves take place:

a) The dorsum (back part of the tongue), that was previously an active articulator, stops playing any role. As a result, velum (soft palate) doesn't get lower either;

b) The part of the tongue just before the dorsum suddenly wakes up in order to play the role of an active articulator. As a result, it moves towards the hard palate for the sake of palatalisation.

Labialization or rounding can be observed in the word 'pool'. In this process of assimilation, the rounded sound affects its preceding unrounded sound and makes it partially or fully rounded. Such a rounded execution of an otherwise unrounded sound can also be named coarticulation. Crystal (1992) writes:

> "the overlap of articulatory movements associated
> with different speech segments; for example, the / t /
> of 'too' is produced with rounded lips, because of
> the influence of the rounding which is part of the
> following vowel (compare the / t / of 'tea', where
> there is no rounding"[7]

Interestingly enough, there are some linguists, called purists, who object to the use of such phonological processes. They hold the view that such phenomena in fact corrupt the pure and the natural form of speech. They believe that this type of linguistic corruption mars the inherent beauty of language. In other words, such processes do not represent the essence of a language: its true soul. But historically speaking, all languages evolve, develop and even die. They do not follow many hard and fast rules like mathematics. Each language depends on a particular linguistic community and vice versa. The use of such fluency devices by the native speaker is not rare; it can be observed all around us. These phenomena might not be commonly found in a language while it is still undergoing evolution. But, once it has gone past its embryonic stage and grown into an adult language, these phonological features will start cropping up. At this stage, no native speaker of a language will stay unaffected, not even purists. Crystal (1999) writes:

> "purists sometimes insist that people should speak
> slowly and carefully, so as to avoid assimilations;
> but speech production of this kind would sound
> highly unnatural, and no one (not even purist critics)
> can avoid assimilating some of the time"[8].

Conclusion:

In a nutshell, assimilation is a tool or a method that helps speakers speed up their connected speech. Both consonants and vowels play a vital role in this process. In our day to day speech pure consonantal, pure vocalic and dual assimilation or conso-vocalic assimilation can be

observed. The process of assimilation follows various rules though its occurrence might look quite random at the surface level. Its chief reasons are economy of effort and convenience of muscular movement. It has lubricating effect on the muscles which results in smoother and easier execution of speech. That's why assimilated versions of words and phrases are more economical to pronounce. This phonological phenomenon can be observed perhaps in all languages since articulatory habits of all human beings are almost same though some linguists object to its use. Last but not least, assimilation can't be avoided at times and even the purists can fall prey to it.

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