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About NEI ([www.neiindia.org](http://www.neiindia.org))

New Education Initiative is a group of professional educationists dedicated to advancing educational goals advocating Quality embedded education with Innovative Pedagogy, Inclusive Cultural constructs, and Cutting-Edge Technology. It is also a “Knowledge sharing platform” for all Educational Institutions, Professional colleges, Management Institutes, and other Skills Development Centers, established with an objective of building intellectual capital leveraging the most updated technological tools. It seeks to be a transformative agent working for an Equitable, Integrated education giving high priority to the education of the Weaker and Marginalized segments of Indian society.

NEI seeks to apply Disruptive-Innovative, Ideation-Creative, adaptive Future-oriented Sustainable technologies to ensure systemic changes. It will apply Qualitative delivery methodologies to enhance educational services and produce Advanced learning outcomes for all individuals ensuring Equity in Education. It will foster growth, fraternity, national integration, employment, entrepreneurship and contribute to the National economy and Global advancement.

NEI will be working on a Pilot project wherein English Language will be taught using MOOC constructed on the Pedagogy called Discourse Oriented Pedagogy (DOP) as advocated by Dr. Anandan and summarized below. **KINDLY REVIEW, WRITE SUGGESTIONS AND SUPPORT US.**

Thank you

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# **English Language Pedagogy by Dr Anandan.**

## **1. SUMMARY**

There are a few classroom practices that are most commonly used for teaching and learning English. These include teaching the letters of the alphabet, teaching structures and vocabulary items, role-playing, asking comprehension questions, etc. A closer look at these processes reveals that they are inherently incapable of helping the students learn English as a second language.

## **2. TEXT**

### **Module 1: Introduction**

We will begin with a critical examination of the most popular classroom practices.

- Teach the letters of the alphabet with the help of charts and flash cards.
- Show pictures or objects and introduce common English words such as pen, book, table, hand, and eye.
- Introduce simple sentences showing pictures or objects such as ‘This is a pen; ‘This is a book’.
- Introduce sentences like ‘I am standing’, ‘You are sitting’ through demonstration.
- Teach some ‘simple’ rhymes.
- Tell ‘simple’ stories.
- Teach structures and vocabulary.
- Teach LSRW.
- Perform role-plays.
- Teach grammar and phonetics

Teachers have been following these strategies in a ‘taken-for-granted’ manner without suspicion. There was not any felt need to reflect on any of them. Since language has been conventionally conceived as a ‘skills subject’ as against ‘content subjects’ such as physics or history, making the learners practice language skills has always been the prime concern of any language teacher. In

the sessions that follow we will critically examine the assumptions and strategies that underlie present-day English Language Teaching.

## **Module 2: Case study: Teaching the alphabet – The Issues**

Several thousands of teachers across the world have been taking recourse to teaching the alphabet for decades. Parents are keen to buy ‘A-for-apple’ kind of English primers for their children. Right now, on my table there are some English primers from renowned publishers. They contain explicit directions for children to draw strokes of different kinds. This activity is supposedly meant for leading them to the mechanics of writing beginning from letters, words, sentences and finally, passages.

Why do teachers start teaching English with the teaching of alphabet? The plausible reasons are:

- The alphabet makes the simplest unit of language.
- Learning ‘ABC’ is relatively easier for any child when compared to learning sentences and passages.
- We have to go from ‘the simple to the complex.’

The alphabet constitutes the smallest units of language, we know it. But are they simple enough for the child to learn? If smallness is the criterion for defining something as simple, then it should be easy for the child to learn about atoms. What makes something simple or complex for the child is her experience. She makes sense of the world around her through her experience. The alphabet does not make any sense to her. She may be able to learn them and reproduce them from her memory. When she enters the real world of reading, she will naturally face a problem. The letters of the alphabet in isolation are articulated in one way; when they appear in words, each letter is pronounced in a different way. Reading thus becomes hazardous and slow.

## **Module 3: Case study - Beginning with Words or Sentences**

Showing an object (for example, a pencil) and saying ‘This is a pencil’ too is a common strategy used to teach English for the beginners. We have a few questions to pose.

- Will children understand the sentence ‘This is a pen?’

- What do you mean by understanding something?
- What is the relationship between language and thought?
- Can there be language without thought?
- What could be the thought generated in the minds of children when the teacher shows an object and says, ‘This is a pen?’

Understanding or making sense at the instance of listening to something is an instantaneous mental process which involves thinking. What will be the thoughts of our learners when the teacher says the sentence, ‘This is a pen’ or ‘This is a chair?’ Isn’t it possible that the following thoughts are generated in their minds?

‘That’s a nice pen.’

‘I like that pen.’

‘My sister has a similar pen.’

‘It’s a ball pen,’ etc.

The sentence that the learners hear is ‘This is a pen’ and the thoughts or the ideas that are generated in their minds while watching the pen are different. Thus, we confront with the following problem:

***Problem-1***

***There is a mismatch between the linguistic expression supplied by the teacher and the thought generated in the minds of the learners.***

We have a few more questions to ask:

1. *What is the communicative function served by the sentence, ‘This is a pen’?*
2. *Will the communicative function get registered in the minds of children through the activity suggested here?*

We use sentences like this when we identify objects. Here the pen is a familiar object. There is nothing to be identified about it. Understanding a particular structure in English also means

realizing its communicative function. A sentence devoid of its communicative function is useless in the world of interpersonal communications. This situation leads us to the second problem:

***Problem 2:***

***The communicative function of the structure /sentence under consideration does not get registered in the minds of learners.***

We are tempted to us to ask one more question.

Does a sentence like ‘This is a pen’ exist in isolation in real life situations?

In order to answer this question, we will have to examine how language survives around us.

We find language in the print media (Newspapers, journals, books, etc.) in the form of news reports, letters, articles, poems, etc.

It appears in the visual media in the form of songs, films, news bulletins, interviews, etc.

It is there in our day-to-day life in the form of conversations, announcements, songs, stories, etc.

In all these we do not find words or sentences in isolation. People do not move around speaking disconnected sounds, words or even sentences. If at all they do, there will be a specific context for that which provides the pretext for these elements.

When we teach isolated expressions in language class, we confront with the third problem:

***Problem 3***

***Language does not exist in the world in the form of isolated sounds, words or sentence. The sentence, ‘This is a pen’ in isolation does not provide authentic linguistic experience for the learners.***

Just think about the way we picked up our mother tongue. We didn’t begin with the alphabet, did we? Mothers across cultures do not interact with their children using alphabets in isolation. We

do not acquire mother tongue in a linear way, beginning with the smallest units, say, the letters or sounds and then proceeding to words, sentences and so on.

#### **Module 4: Case study - Practicing dialogues**

Practicing dialogues is an extremely popular strategy used in language classes. The textbook will have a few dialogues in them which the learners are expected to practice.

Why do textbook writers insist on teaching English by making the learners perform a role-play in this manner?

When children reproduce a conversation can, we call it a conversation?

Why can't we go for a role-playing activity which will demand children to generate language rather than reproduce a few expressions that they have already learnt by-heart?

It is assumed that a learner who has memorized dialogues that suit to various communicative functions will be able to use them for interpersonal communication.

In real life whenever we get involved in an interpersonal communicative situation, we generate language specific to the context in our own way. We express our thoughts or ideas as they are triggered off in our minds. For doing this we will not get ready with a pre-decided dialogue that might suit to a given occasion.

#### **Module 4: Case study - Asking comprehension questions**

After teaching a reading passage, children are asked to respond to the comprehension questions given at the end. Moreover, they are asked to write the answers in their notebooks. Students do this dutifully, memorize and reproduce these at the time of examination. Let us critically examine this activity.

- Why do we ask comprehension questions?
- Does communication take place by eliciting the response to a comprehension question?

- If sharing of ideas is intended whose idea is shared here? Is it that of the teacher or the learner?
- There is a question and an answer to it. Though it looks like a dialogue, can we call it a dialogue?

Children learn lots of questions and their corresponding answers by-heart and reproduce what they know on the answer sheets. Once again we are relying on the ability of the learner to memorize information. Rote memorization is a curse that has fallen upon our second language classes through decades from which the learner is never allowed to escape.

It is high time we examined the good old techniques and strategies of teaching English critically. We cannot go forward in a taken - for -granted manner. We must be sensitive to the inherent problems of the methodology we have been using to teach English

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## **SUMMARY**

Chomsky conceptualizes language as a genetic endowment, which is called Universal Grammar, UG. The core idea of language is that language involves “the infinite use of finite means. UG comprises a set of well-defined principles which account for the common properties of all possible human languages and a set of parameters which take care of the differences between any two languages. Acquiring a language is nothing more than learning how the principles of UG are applied in that language and learning the value of each parameter allowed by UG.

There are theoreticians such as Jean Aitchison (1989), Lenneberg (1967), who observe that language is a biologically triggered off behavior which can be treated on a par with similar behaviors like walking or sexual behavior. There is a regular sequence of ‘milestones’ as the behavior develops, and these can usually be correlated with age and other aspects of development. We cannot develop a language pedagogy overlooking these theoretical assumptions.

## **Module 1: Changing belief systems**

Why did our ancestors of remote past believe that the Earth was flat and that it was static?

- Man had only very little understanding about the cosmic phenomenon.
- The claims were supported by what was observable for man.
- It was not possible to look at the Earth holistically from a place not belonging to the Earth.
- There was no evidence to support the claims on the round Earth and its movement around the Sun.

As time passed new knowledge systems emerged. Man's space explorations have helped him look at the Earth from above, a possibility that was not available for the earlier thinkers. In the light of evidence that is available in abundance we are ready to reject the ancestral beliefs about earth and sun. What about the most popular beliefs related to language?

Let us pose two questions:

1: Does the newborn child know anything about language?

2. How does the child learn a language?

The populist beliefs are that the child does not know anything about language and that she learns a language by virtue of imitation and repetition. These beliefs are rooted in commonplace observations. These were further strengthened and supplemented by a few schools of thought that had gained currency in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is necessary to examine some of those theoretical claims.

- The child's mind is like an empty slate (tabula rasa) which gets filled with experience from the speech community
- Language is a behavioral manifestation which can be accounted in terms of stimulus and response
- Language is a baggage of language elements such as sounds / letters, structures, functions, idioms, usages, etc.
- Language is a skills subject as against other subjects such as physics or geography. It can be learnt by practicing language skills such as Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW).



- Errors made by learners are to be corrected as and when they are made or else they will be negatively reinforced; it will be difficult to get rid of the errors that are learnt.
- The child needs a lot of exposure to language. This is naturally available in the case of learning mother tongue.
- The language elements are to be taught in a linear way, beginning from sounds or letters and proceeding to words, sentences and finally to passages so that they are learnable by the children.

These claims had been made by different schools of thought. For example, the tabula rasa account of human mind was proposed by a school of thought known as **empiricism**. The stimulus response theory came from psychology of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, popularly known today as **behaviorism**. The conceptualization of language as a body of linguistic elements can be attributed to a branch of linguistics nameable as **structuralism**. Behaviorism in unison with empiricism and structuralism gained profound control in moulding popular belief systems related to language, learning and knowledge.

Ever since the emergence of cognitive psychology and the theory on innateness language put forward by Chomsky language has been conceived as a genetic endowment. In the lessons that follow we will examine the pedagogical implications of the changed perspective on language.

## **Module 2: Language as a Genetic Endowment**

The notion of innate language is central to Chomskyan revolution. How does language grow in the mind of a person? Surely, it is not taught by anyone. It was inquiry in this direction that led Chomsky to propose the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which eventually was labelled as Universal Grammar.

“For language we can analyze the genetic environment into a component specific to human language ... that is universal grammar –UG and other components of the genetic environment that... somehow relevant to language development, cognitive systems, physiological structures, and so on.”

The core idea of language is that language involves “the infinite use of finite means”. This has to do with computational processes, sometimes called ‘generative’ processes.

The theory of UG of 1980's is also known as the Principles and Parameters Model. The child's innate language system comprises a set of well-defined principles which account for the common properties of all possible human languages and a set of parameters which take care of the differences between any two languages. Let us illustrate the point.

How do we say the idea, 'John ate a mango,' in our languages? In Malayalam we say, 'Jon pazham thinnu.' Look at the expression *ate a mango*. It is a verb phrase. In this structure, the Verb, *ate* is the Head and *a mango* is its complement. In the Indian languages we find the Complement first which is followed by the Head. The difference in the sequencing of Head and its Complement is captured by the Head parameter. This parameter decides the Head-Complement vs. Complement-Verb ordering. There are other parameters which decide the other differences between languages. In the initial state of language the value of the various parameters will not be specified. Depending on the input the child gets from her speech community the value of each parameter will be fixed in one way or the other. Acquiring a language is nothing more than learning how the principles of UG are applied in that language and learning the value of each parameter allowed by UG.

The findings from neurobiology also support the claim on language as a biological gift of man. Certain areas in the left hemisphere of human brain such as the Broca's area' and Wernicke's area have been identified as exclusively related to language reception and production.

### **Module 3: Language as a biologically triggered off behavior**

There are theoreticians such as Jean Aitchison (1989), Lenneberg (1967), who observe that language is a biologically triggered off behavior which can be treated on a par with similar behaviors like walking or sexual behavior. In her book *The Articulate Mammal*, Aitchison has discussed the characteristics of language as a biologically triggered off behavior. Let us see what these are:

Language is not absolutely necessary for the child to survive. Even if she does not use language her basic needs like food and shelter will be taken care of by the adults. The behavior emerges before it is necessary. What about the child's awareness that she is learning a language? Is language learning the result of a conscious decision? Definitely not. It takes place naturally. That means its appearance is not the result of a conscious decision. Not only that. The

environment is sufficiently 'rich' for the development of language. Nevertheless, the new born child does not start speaking the moment she is born. There is no external event to trigger off the behavior. There is another interesting point. The parents do not teach their children how to speak. Direct teaching and intensive practice have relatively little effect. Moreover, overt correction is not necessarily successful. We can also see a regular sequence of 'milestones' as the behaviour develops, and these can usually be correlated with age and other aspects of development. Experts say that there may be a 'critical period' for the acquisition of the behaviour.

Millions of moms, dads, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings and caregivers all over the world use melodic intonation and higher pitch when they talk with their favourite babies. This universal baby talk is called "Motherese" among lay people and "infant directed speech" by the experts.

There is a regular sequence of 'milestones' as the behavior develops, and these can usually be correlated with age and other aspects of development.

#### *Language stage Beginning age*

Crying - Birth; Cooing - 6 weeks; Babbling - 6 months; Intonation patterns - 8 months;  
One-word utterances - 1 year; Two-word utterances - 18 months; Word inflections - 2 years;  
Questions, negatives - 2 1/4 years; Rare or complex constructions - 5 years;  
Mature speech - 10 years

#### **Module 4: Theoretical Assumptions**

The convergence of theoretical linguistics, cognitive psychology and experiential pedagogy has derived new insights into language pedagogy. With these insights we can propose the following theoretical assumptions:

Language is man's biological system which gets unfolded.

Language acquisition is a non-conscious process.

Language is acquired not through learning and practising isolated language facts such as words, structures but through clusters of linguistic expressions involved in the reception and production of discourses.

Language is not the totality of the four skills (LSRW) but the inner competence manifest in the performance of their skills.

Language acquisition can take place only in a collaborative environment where the child gets ample opportunities to get involved in interpersonal and intrapersonal communication.

Language is acquired not through repetition but through recurrence.

Language acquisition is facilitated not by learning linguistic facts (such as vocabulary, structures) in isolation but through the clustering of these facts in meaningful discourses.

We cannot develop a language pedagogy overlooking these assumptions.

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## **SUMMARY**

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The conventional methods that are in tune with the behaviorist paradigm treat language as an assemblage of various parts of language, or facts of language such as vocabulary, structures. Learners are expected to learn these facts by heart because the assumption is that once this is done they can make use of these facts whenever they are needed in life situations learners through rigorous practice. The problem central to all these approaches is that they fail to offer a holistic treatment to language. It is in this backdrop that Discourse Oriented Pedagogy (DOP) came into being. The salient features of DOP have been spelt out in Anandan (2006), which can be summarized as follows:

The learners get a rich linguistic experience by virtue of the spiraling of discourses and themes. At all stages of classroom transaction, the prime concern is to make the inputs comprehensible to the learners so that there is no need to check comprehension. DOP takes care of skill development. But this is done within the context of experiencing a variety of discourse genres and writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. DOP conforms to the Whole Language philosophy. There is language everywhere around us: it is there in the print media, visual media, and day to day life. The language that is in use is in the form of discourses such as conversations, descriptions, narratives, letters, reports, etc. there are a few properties that differentiate discourses from

sentences. These are: coherence, varying length, use of grammar beyond sentence grammar and subjectivity. For pedagogic purpose we have to identify the discourses that are to be targeted at various levels. Also, we have to identify the features of each discourse and the levels at which these features are to be addressed. This leads to an inventory of class-wise discourses and their features.

#### **4. TEXT**

##### **Module 1: Language in Use**

The conventional methods that are in tune with the behaviorist paradigm treat language as an assemblage of various parts of language, or facts of language such as vocabulary, structures. Learners are expected to learn these facts by heart because the assumption is that once this is done, they can make use of these facts whenever they are needed in life situations. In order to ensure this, result these approaches take recourse to a variety of strategies that take care of the repetition of linguistic facts. Moreover, they focus on skills of language which are to be learnt by learners through rigorous practice. The problem central to all these approaches is that they fail to offer a holistic treatment to language.

It is fairly easy to recognize that linguistic units such as sounds, words, and sentences are not entities in isolation. Let us see how language exists around us.

In the print media we can see news reports, editorials, advertisements, notices, obituaries, articles, cartoons, jokes, stories, poems, interviews, review reports, letters, screen plays, skits, in visual media there are news telecasts, TV phone-in, TV serials, interviews, songs, movies, comedy shows, debates, conversations, lectures, skits, etc. In daily life language exists as Chats, dialogues, debates, narratives, songs, stories, descriptions, announcements, enquiries, etc. hues we get a fairly good list of language material that can be named as discourses.

Since language exists in the form of connected speech that can be named as discourses, we need to have a pedagogy that will help learners produce these. There is no point in teaching and learning discrete units of language such as letters, words and sentences. The learners have to experience language in use which means that both the input and the output are to be defined in terms of discourses.

Since language exists in the form of connected speech that can be named as discourses, we need to have a pedagogy that will help learners produce these. There is no point in teaching and learning discrete units of language such as letters, words, and sentences. The learners have to experience language in use which means that both the input and the output are to be defined in terms of discourses.

## **Module 2: Properties of Discourses**

Any connected series of utterance can be called a discourse. A lexicographer might tell us that one of the meanings of the word discourse is related to the use of language in speech and writing in order to produce meaning. These statements might help us to define what a discourse is but a mere definition will not suffice. We should be able to identify the properties of discourses which will help us distinguish discourses from sentences.

Consider the two texts of sentences:

### **Set A**

This is a boy.

That is a girl.

There is a pen on the table.

These are pencils.

### **Set B**

*'It's--it's a very fine day!'* said a timid voice at her side.

She was walking by the White Rabbit, who was peeping anxiously into her face. *'Very,'* said Alice: *'--where's the Duchess?'*

*'Hush! Hush!'* said the Rabbit in a low, hurried tone. He looked anxiously over his shoulder as he spoke, and then raised himself upon tiptoe, put his mouth close to her ear, and whispered *'She's under sentence of execution.'*

*'What for?'* said Alice.

*'Did you say "What a pity!"?'* the Rabbit asked.

*'No, I didn't,' said Alice: 'I don't think it's at all a pity. I said, "What for?"'*

What are the differences between the two units of language? The first unit consists of disconnected sentences and as a whole it does not communicate. The second kind of language consists of interconnected sentences. The second unit communicates because it has coherence. It is the language that can be seen in discourses such as conversations, stories, dramas, and the like. This is not idealized language in accordance with the parameters of sentence grammar but language in use.

Let us examine another specimen of discourse.

Waiter: At your service, Sir.

Customer: Well, some starter, please!

Waiter: How about chicken soup?

Customer: Oh, no! I'm vegetarian

Waiter: Like to go for tomato?

Customer: Fine!

Waiter: Anything else, Sir?

Customer: Well, chapatti ... dry ones ... and vegetable stew

Waiter: How about fried rice?

Customer: No, thanks.

We cannot expect that a discourse emerging in communicative situations will consist of all and only grammatically well-formed sentences.

Let us watch another clipping.

Man 1: So?

Man 2: Oh, nothing.

Man 1: Are you sure?

Man 2: Yes.

Man 1: But why?

Man 2: Just like that.

Man 1: Just like that?

Man 2: Hmm!

We can't put any constraint on the length of a discourse. It depends upon the context in which the discourse appears. Sometimes even a grunt or a single expletive (i.e. swear-word or an expression used in exclamations) can be a discourse provided that it is uttered in a proper context. Or it can be a sequence of utterances as seen in short conversations, scribbled notes, narratives or even a novel that runs into several volumes. The only point that matters is that it communicates and is considered coherent by its receivers.

Another property of discourse is its subjectivity.

Wife: Did you take medicines?

Husband: No.

Wife: Good. Did you consult the doctor?

Husband: No, but I will.

Wife: Good.

RP: Certain pieces of language can be classified as discourse only by invoking subjectivity. Only the couple who are involved in the conversation knows how to interpret the word 'good' in the conversation.

The specimens we have come across reveal another property of discourses. It is called authenticity. Every sentence may not be grammatical but the discourse has authenticity. Mere grammaticality does not guarantee authenticity of the discourse.

We have seen that discourses

- Have coherence
- Use grammar beyond sentences
- Have varying length
- Have authenticity
- Have subjectivity

### **Module 3**



Discourse Oriented pedagogy necessitates the redefining of curricular objectives in terms of discourses and not in terms of structures and their relevant communication functions. Let us see how this can be done.

Two important steps are to be carried out. One, identify the discourses that are to be targeted at each level and (2) identify the level of each genre of discourse.

It is expected that the learners in class I will be able to construct the discourses as shown in Table 1 given below both orally and in the written form by virtue of listening to and reading these discourses. Dialogue

Description (object)  
Story  
Rhyme / Song

In class 10 the discourses targeted are the following:

See the discourses targeted at Grade 10.

1. Novella
2. Letters (personal, official)
3. Notices for various occasions
4. Compeering
5. Minutes of functions
6. Running commentaries (for cricket, football, etc.)
7. Profile
8. Biographical writing
9. Short stories
10. Editorial
11. Advertisements
12. Memoirs
13. Travelogue
14. Prefaces
15. News reports
16. Critical Reviews (of stories, dramas, films, etc.)
17. Essays
18. Soliloquy
19. Drama script
20. Choreography scripts

As can be seen from the list the higher we go up the greater number of discourses are targeted. Also, there will be differences in the features of each discourse.

As we have discussed we have to have a pedagogy that provides holistic linguistic experience to the learners. It is in this backdrop that Discourse Oriented Pedagogy (DOP) came into being. The salient features of DOP have been spelt out in Anandan (2006), which can be summarized as follows:

The learners get a rich linguistic experience by virtue of the spiraling of discourses and themes. The intuitive idea is that on the one hand, the language input and outputs of the learners include a variety of discourse genres with the recurrence of the same theme and on the other hand, the recurrence of the same discourse genre with different themes. Take for example, the recurrence of the theme marginalization in a variety of discourses such as story, poem, essay, drama, etc. which the learners read, listen to, and construct. To put in a different way, we can say that a variety of discourses are spiraled around the recurrent theme, marginalization. Likewise, there is also the spiraling of various themes with the recurrence of a certain type of discourse, say, for example, story.

At all stages of classroom transaction, the prime concern is to make the inputs comprehensible to the learners so that there is no need to check comprehension. DOP assumes that comprehension is a process that takes place in the mind of the individual learner by virtue of the interplay of several factors such as the context of the discourse, the communicational expectancy triggered in the learner's mind, familiar words, images created through narratives, brainstorming through interaction, prosodic features, gestures, and facial expressions used by the facilitator, code-switching, collaboration with peers, etc.

DOP takes care of skill development. But this is done within the context of experiencing a variety of discourse genres and writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. Skills will not be taught isolating them from their use or by means of artificially contrived skills lessons. No one can read an alphabetic language without considering the connection between sounds and symbols. But these connections are not the only cues readers use to make sense of what they are reading. Similarly, it is not the word meaning alone that will help learners to comprehend what is presented to them orally. There are several cues available for the learner to make predictions about what is read or heard. Teachers will help children learn how to use all the available cues.

DOP conforms to the Whole Language philosophy. There is a solid foundation of research stemming from cognitive psychology and learning theory, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, language acquisition and emergent literacy, as well as from education, to support a whole language perspective. Researchers have found that whole language learning/teaching fosters a much richer

range of literacy attitudes, abilities, and behaviors than more traditional approaches. Since the focus is on process and not the product, any teacher who is sincerely interested in becoming a discourse facilitator can become one. In fact, the teacher's role is minimal. We believe that all individuals, whether they are teachers, administrators or students can grow and change.

#### **Module 4**

The list of discourses to be constructed at various levels does not specify what features of these discourses are to be learnt. We have to identify the various linguistic levels of these discourses.

We developed a full inventory of all the possible features of each of the 20 genres of discourses targeted at Grade 12. From these we identified the features to be addressed in each Grade. The academic standards were stated in such a way that they made suggestions on the input and the output. For example, here is a set of academic standards relevant for the discourse, conversation at Grade 8.

#### **Grade 8**

##### **Academic Standards - Conversations / Dialogues**

1. Listen to, and read dialogues related to specific contexts.
2. Construct dialogues containing a few exchanges using short expressions and tags wherever necessary orally and in writing.
3. Role-play own dialogues related to specific contexts using appropriate actions and voice modulation.
4. Interact effectively with others on themes that are relevant to them, seeking and giving explanations, asking for confirmation, and expressing agreement or disagreement.

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#### **5. 2. SUMMARY**

6. There are some discourses such as conversation taken up at all levels of learning. We can differentiate the conversations constructed by a learner at the Primary level from that constructed by a High school student in terms of the features of each discourse. These features can be distributed across various grades based on their linguistic levels. For example, a mere initiation and response will be enough for the beginner but as she goes up to higher levels, we expect conversations refined structurally and stylistically.

The conversation constructed at the primary level may not have discourse markers or tags in it. But a conversation constructed by a high school student will necessarily contain these linguistic elements. Similarly, a sequence of events and dialogues make the simplest structure of a narrative. At the higher levels there can be features like sensual perceptions, images, etc. Similar differentiations will be necessary for the other discourses also.

### **3. TEXT**

There are some discourses such as conversation taken up at all levels of learning. How will we differentiate the conversations constructed by a learner at the Primary level from that constructed by a High school student? We can do this by identifying the features of each discourse and then distributing these across various grades based on their linguistic levels. We can illustrate this point with the help of a few specimens of conversations. Consider the two pieces of conversations:

#### **1. Raju and Rani**

Raju: Where is your book?

Rani: My book is on the table. Where is your book?

Rani: My book is in my bag.

#### **2. Ravi and Meera**

Ravi: What are you looking for?

Meera: The remote. You were holding it, weren't you?

Ravi: Hmm. I kept it on the tea poi.

Meera: Are you sure?

Ravi: Of course, I am.

Meera: Why is it missing, then?

Ravi: Who knows!

You have read the two pieces of conversation. Which one is linguistically at a higher level? The second one is at a higher level because it contains tags and short responses. Let's consider a few more specimens.

#### **Matilda and the Librarian**

Matilda: Where 's "The children's books" please?

Librarian: In that room right out there. Would you like me to pick one with a lot of pictures in it?

Matilda: No thank you. I'm sure I can manage.

(Cut)

### **Mr. Wormwood and Matilda**

Mr. Wormwood: Where did all this come from?

Matilda: From the library.

Mr. Wormwood: The library? You never set foot in the library. You're only 4 years old.

Matilda: Six and a half

Mr. Wormwood: You are four.

Matilda: Six and a half.

Mr. Wormwood. If you were six you would be in school already.

Matilda: I must be in school. I told you. I was supposed to start school last September. You wouldn't listen.

### **From Fiddler on the Roof**

Daughter 1: Mama. Mama, Yente the matchmaker is coming.

Daughter 2: Maybe she's finally found a good match for you, Tzeitel.

Mother: From your mouth to God's ears.

Daughter 3: Why does she have to come now? It's almost Sabbath.

Mother: Out, all of you! I want to talk to Yente alone.

Daughter 3: But, Mama, the men she finds... The last one was so old. And he was bald! He had no hair.

Mother: A poor girl without a dowry can't be so particular. You want hair, marry a monkey.

Daughter 3: Even a poor girl without a dowry has to look at her husband sometimes.

Mother: A husband is not to look at, a husband is to get.

Daughter 3: But, Mama, I'm not yet 20 years old. I don't think ...

Mother: Sha! Do you have to boast about your age? You'll tempt the evil eye.

Out, all of you.

From the specimens of conversations, we can deduce the features of conversation. These are

- Initiation
- Response appropriate to the initiation
- Two or more exchanges
- Ideas and feelings relevant to the context
- Proper sequence of exchanges
- Sustaining the conversation
- Contextual relevance
- Maintaining of social norms
- Use of discourse markers (well, precisely, etc.)
- Avoiding digression
- Uses connectives contextually
- Uses pronouns properly
- Uses formulaic expressions

A mere initiation and response will be enough for the beginner but as she goes up to higher levels, we expect conversations refined structurally and stylistically. The conversation constructed at the primary level may not have discourse markers or tags in it. But a conversation constructed by a high school student will necessarily contain these linguistic elements. Similar differentiations will be necessary for the other discourses also.

## **Module 2: Descriptions**

Quite often people get involved in certain situations where they may have to talk about others. Sometimes they may have to talk about other things such as places, things, events, processes and so on. This is why we have included description as one of the discourses to be addressed. There are different types of descriptions. See the different types of descriptions.

### **Describing a person**

details such as who and what the person is, physical attributes, societal status, achievements, contributions, personal impressions, etc.

### **Describing an object**

details such as what it is, where it is found, physical properties such as shape and colour, what it is used for, etc.

### **Describing a place**

Scenic details of the location, images, sensory perceptions, etc.

### **Describing events**

details such as what the event is, where it is taking place, the persons or things involved, the order of events, scenic details, images, sensory perceptions, etc.

### **Describing a process**

details such as what it is for, things involved, sequence, etc.

Here is an excerpt from Henry James' story, 'The Lightman'.

We found him in his library, ... a room arranged for a lifetime. At one end stands a great fireplace, with a florid, fantastic mantelpiece in carved white marble ... Over the mantelshelf is a large landscape, a fine Gainsborough, full of the complicated harmonies of an English summer. Beneath it stands a row of bronzes of the Renaissance and potteries of the Orient. Facing the door, as you enter, is an immense window set in a recess, with cushioned seats and large clear panes, stationed as it were at the very apex of the lake ... At the other end, opposite the fireplace, the wall is studded, from floor to ceiling, with choice foreign paintings, placed in relief against the orthodox crimson screen.

This is the description of a room as given in Henry James' story, 'The Lightman.' See how the writer creates a vivid picture of the room in the minds of the readers. There is the description of a person from the same author.

He is curiously pale, with a kind of opaque yellow pallor. Literally, it is a magnificent yellow. His skin is of just the hue and apparent texture of some old, crumpled Oriental scroll. I know a dozen painters who would give more than they must arrive at the exact "tone" of his thick-veined, bloodless hands, his polished ivory knuckles. His eyes are circled with red, but in the battered little setting of their orbits they have the lustre of old

sapphires. His nose, owing to the falling away of other portions of his face, has assumed a grotesque, unnatural prominence; it describes an immense arch, gleaming like a piece of parchment stretched on ivory. He has, apparently, all his teeth, but has muffled his cranium in a dead black wig; of course, he's clean shaven. In his dress he has a muffled, wadded look and an apparent aversion to linen, in as much as none is visible on his person. He seems neat enough, but not fastidious. ... his eyes are the oldest eyes I ever saw, and yet they are wonderfully living. He has something remarkably insinuating.'

Please note that description as a distinct discourse is relevant at the lower levels; at higher levels description may get merged with other discourses such as narratives, autobiographies, even in dramas and screen plays.

### **SUBJECT EXPERT**

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