About Ourselves

Yet another association! No. Not really. FORTELL is not meant for the ritual of paper readings; it is meant to be a forum for professional interaction.

Interaction is a two-way communication process; not a talking down process. A presenter could come and pose teaching problems to the group for discussion and together they can work out approaches to overcome the problems.

But 'problems' is a wrong word. There are no problems in our profession, there are situations and people, the people are teachers and students and parents.

We believe professional development comes from a developing teacher. So share with us your teaching experiences and your knowledge of language and literature and the learning processes involved.

How it all Began

The idea of an organisation of teachers of English had been in the air for sometime but it took concrete shape at a seminar on distance education led by Professor John Merritt of the British Open University at the School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education, University of Delhi in September 1989. On the last day the participants decided to form the group then called FORTE INDIA.*

Since then the forum has organised several seminars and discussions. The latest effort of the forum was a three-day seminar-cum-workshop on the Teaching of Grammar in Context led by Mrs. Sylvia Chalker, freelance ELT specialist held in collaboration with the British Council, New Delhi at the School of Correspondence Courses in March 1991. The details of the activities of FORTELL are given elsewhere in the newsletter.

*Rechristened FORTELL to make it explicit that teaching of English includes literature as well as language.

FORTELL Aims

* to promote professional development of the teachers of English.
* to collect and disseminate useful information about new developments in the teaching of English language and literature.
* to provide opportunities for discussion, individual/group studies of the issues involved.
* to organise and sponsor national/international seminars/workshops/conferences on topics related to the teaching of language and literature.
* to build a Resource-cum-Research Centre with a well-equipped library and other facilities for research and study in the fields of English language and literature teaching in India.
Besides reporting the activities of FORTELL, the newsletter will contain information about the latest thinking that is going on in the field of English language and literature teaching.

The newsletter also aims to provide a forum for ideas, experiments, problems, suggestions, report of activities and for getting in touch with others who share the same interests as you do.

**FORTELL has applied for affiliation to IATEFL.**

## List of Members of FORTELL

**Honorary Members**

1. Prof. S.K. Verma, Director CIEFL, Hyderabad
2. Principal Ruddar Datt, School of C/Courses
3. Mr. Julian Edge, ELT Specialist, U.K.
4. Mrs. Sylvia Chalker, Freelance ELT specialist, U.K.
5. Mrs. Mike Connolly, ELT Specialist, U.K.

**Life Members**

1. Mrs. Kusum Virmani, Shyama Prasad Mukherji (S.P.M.)
2. Mrs. Tara Chadha (SPM)
3. Mrs. Geeta Kumar (SPM)
4. Mrs. K. Dasgupta School of Correspondence Courses (SCC)
5. Mrs. Mary Samuel (SCC)
6. Mrs. K. Ojha (SCC)
7. Dr. Naresh K. Jain (SCC)
8. Mr. P. C. Khanna (SCC)
9. Mr. S. C. Sood (Dyal Singh Even)
10. Mr. Prem S. Mathur (English Studies Officer, British High Commission, British Council, New Delhi.)
11. Ms. Aparna Passi (Kulachi Hans Raj Model School, Delhi)
12. Mrs. Sunita Sareen (Air Force School, Subroto Park, N. Delhi)
13. Mrs. Madhur Datta (Govt. Co-Ed Senior School, Delhi)
14. Mr. Gulshan Rai Taneja Ramlal Anand (RLA)
15. Mr. Vijay K. Sharma (RLA Even.)

**Annual Members**

1. Mrs. Divya Sakseya Sri Aurobindo College. (SAC)
2. Dr. Ashwini K. Sethi (SAC)
3. Ms. Mala Uppal (SAC)
4. Ms. Neenu Chakravartty (Satyawati CoEd)
5. Ms. Kalpana Mehdiratta (Air Force Bal Bharti School, New Delhi.)
6. Ms. Kiran Kashyap (Kendriya Vidyalaya, No. 2, APS Colony Delhi Cantt.)
7. Ms. Veena Bhasin (Birla Vidya Niketan, Pushp Vihar, NOIDA)
8. Mr. Sudesh K. Sawhney (Shyam Lal)
9. Mrs. Shamaanathaka Subramaniam (Delhi University Women's Association.)
10. Mrs. Sharda Rao (DUWA)
11. Mrs. Jyoti Gupta, Vivekananda Mahila (VMC)
12. Mrs. Aparna Rajesh (VMC)
13. Ms. Saravjit Kaur (Dyal Singh Public School, Karnal)
14. Mrs. Madhu Gulia (DSPS, Karnal.)
15. Mrs. Gopa Biswas (National Open School)
17. Mrs. P. Sisodia (Kendriya Vidyalaya, Gole Market)
18. Mr. Ved Prakash (KV, Gole Mkt.)
19. Ms. Latika Narain (IP College)
20. Ms. Devalina Kohli (IPC)
21. Mr. Arvind Chowdhary
22. Ms. Babli Moitra Saraf (Ramjas)
23. Mrs. Anita Kohli.
24. Mr. Kuldeep Agarwal (Deptt. of Education, DU)
25. Mrs. Usha Anand (SCC)
26. Mrs. Neeta Gupta (SCC)
27. Dr. S. S. Gulati (SCC)
28. Ms. Reinu Nagarkar (DPS)
29. Mr. Pankaj Bhan (Swami Shraddhanand)
30. Dr. R. C. Garg (Dyal Singh)
31. Dr. S. S. Sharma (MLN Even)
32. Mrs. Laila Parker (The British School, Chanakyapuri)
33. Ms. Shalini Advani (BS)
34. Ms. Maya Narula (BS)
35. Dr. V. K. Bajpai (NCERT)
36. Mrs. Alka Kumar (SPM)
37. Ms. Indu Bala Arora (Kalindi)
38. Mr. Anil Aneja (SCC)
39. Dr. J. K. Dua (Principal Govt. Co-Ed. Sr. Secd. School, Delhi.)
40. Dr. Amrit L. Khanna (Rajdhani)
41. Ms. Sipra Roy Choudhary
42. Mrs. Krishna Kayal (Sarojini Naidu College)
43. Mrs. Sukla Mitra, (English Studies Officer, British Council, Calcutta)
44. Prof. S. V. Shastri (Shivaji Univ., Kohlapur)
45. Dr. V. Subramaniam (Dy. Director of College Education, Madras.)
46. Prof. R. R. Mehrotra, (BHU)
47. Dr. N. Gangaiah (Regional Inst. of Engineering, Bangalore)
48. Prof. M. P. Jain (IIT, Delhi)
49. Prof. A. K. Tiwari (Univ. of Rajasthan.)
50. Prof. B. M. Sagar (CIEFL)
51. Prof. Ranu Vanikar (M. S. University of Baroda)
52. Ms. Pritinder Jeet (VMC)
54. Ms. Rajni Badlani (British Council Bombay)

Caring and Sharing

ELT Professionals, what can you do ?

Prem Mathur

We get together in seminars to share our knowledge, experience, research, and our problems. It is a professional necessity.

But we need to do more. We need to share our knowhow; we should be sharing continually if we care. And it would cost us practically nothing, in fact we would gain from it.

How To ?

May be somebody has approached you for help, or you approach a school in the neighbourhood where help would be welcome. Select a class that needs most help and work with the teacher. The teacher will teach the class regularly but you could offer to teach a period or two per week. You could discuss with the teacher what works and what does not, and why, what the class needs and how they could be satisfied, what approaches and materials might work, etc. Just remember it would not be a training session, only a sharing session a two way learning session.

After a while, when you are more comfortable with the new environment and begin to know other teachers, share your experiences with them. Possibly this cooperation will mean more progress for more students schoolwise.

Caution

It is a slow process. Snowballing does not take place overnight, it may not even happen! Nor
should one expect spectacular results, such as fantastic materials and tests produced overnight or sudden conversion of students to new ways of learning.

**Rewards**

But there will be other gains. There will be the satisfaction of doing something good for somebody who needs it; the knowledge of processes imbibed from explorations in the classroom will be another gain and the illustrative data gathered could be useful for presenting professional reports or papers.

If you are looking for help from professional volunteers do contact FORTELL.

**A New Beginning**

A new needs-oriented syllabus for teaching English at the B.A. (Pass) level is being introduced in the University of Delhi with effect from July 1991. As a result of the initiative shown by the Department of English under the Chairmanship of Professor R.W. Desai five committees to frame syllabuses for different streams were set up. Work on designing the new syllabuses began as early as in 1985. The task of writing/editing course materials was taken in hand in 1987. To facilitate the process a 35-day UGC funded workshop was held by the Department of English in July - August 1989. The course materials have since been published.

These new courses are claimed to be need-based and learner-centred and are designed to make the teaching/learning of English both more interesting and more meaningful. Teachers of English in Delhi and elsewhere will watch the results of the implementation of the new courses with great interest.

**Activities of FORTELL so far**

1. A two-day seminar on Teacher Development led by Mr. Julian Edge held at the YMCA New Delhi on 16 and 19 December 1989 in collaboration with the British Council, New Delhi.

2. A two-day seminar on the Teaching of English Literature led by Dr. Alan Durant of the University of Strathclyde, U.K. held at the YMCA on 5 and 6 April 1990. (Co-sponsor: The British Council, New Delhi).

3. Mr. S.C. Sood (Dyal Singh Evening) read a paper on Exploiting Newspapers in the Language Classroom with particular reference to English at the School of Correspondence Courses on 10 August 1990.

4. Mrs. Kusum Virmani (Shyama Prasad Mukherjee College) read a paper on Teaching Writing at Tertiary level at SPM College on 26 October 1990.


6. A three-day seminar-cum-workshop on Teaching of Grammar in Context led by Mrs. Sylvia Chalker held at the School of Correspondence Courses on 11 - 13 March 1991.

**A Few of our proposed programmes during the 1991 - 92 session.**

1. Follow-up to Sylvia Chalker's workshop for material production.

2. Teacher Training Workshop for teachers in Delhi rural schools.

3. Presentation by Dr. Naresh Jain on 'Self-Access' materials.

**WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF FORTELL.**

**DO LET US KNOW IF YOU ARE WILLING TO MAKE A PRESENTATION ON TELL.**

**A Report**


The seminar-cum-workshop was led by Mrs. Sylvia Chalker, Freelance ELT Specialist from Britain and author of several books on grammar and usage.
The thrust of the seminar was on teaching and testing of grammar in context rather than as a series of discrete items as is usually done. A major part of the seminar time was devoted to giving teachers practice in preparing materials for teaching grammar items in classroom. For this the teachers worked in groups. The materials prepared were later presented before the participants.

The 50 participants -- all teachers of English from various colleges and schools, from Delhi and the neighbouring state of Haryana -- were given certificates of participation. (Written by Vijay K. Sharma).

**Research in Progress**

1. S.C. Sood has submitted his Ph.D. dissertation on "The Effect of Discourse Awareness on Reading Ability" to the Centre of Linguistics and English, Jawaharlal Nehru University. Supervisor: Dr. R.S. Gupta.

2. Naresh Jain and Kamal Bhasin are working on Effectiveness of study materials in English sent to distance learners in selected Indian Universities. The project is funded by the UGC.

3. Kusum Virmani has written a dissertation on "Communicative Writing Skills in English as a socio-psychological study."

4. Pankaj Bhan is working for his Ph.D. on 'The Use of Children's Literature in the Development of Language Proficiency of Indian Learners of English.' Supervisor: Prof. R.K. Agnihotri.

If you are working on a project including M. Phil/Ph.D. relating to ELLT please send a brief report to the Editor.

The least we can do is write to each other

**Julian Edge**

Writing is difficult. What makes writing about our work even harder is that we are faced by very formal constraints on how we are supposed to present our ideas. So, very few people write. And some that do write are turned down because their writing doesn't meet the formal requirements.

This is a losing situation. Let's start somewhere else.

Courtesy of the British Council, I have just (December 1989) spent two weeks in India, working with teachers of English, teacher trainers and lecturers in associated fields. (And let me take this chance to thank them again for their hospitality and enthusiasm.)

In one place, I was present at the formation of a new teachers' group aiming at cooperation and professional development. In another place, I listened to a teacher argue for the extension of the responsibility of teachers' groups to include localised materials production in place of set textbooks. In yet another, I heard a man in charge of an institution that runs courses for teachers affirm that the best way forward in the Indian situation was to make audiotapes of ideal lessons. Then the teachers would only have to play these tapes and supervise the learners.

At Lucknow airport, there is a plaque on the wall with quotations from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. One of them goes roughly something like this: India will be what we are. If we are big and courageous in our thoughts and actions, India will be big and courageous. If we are small and narrow minded, so will India be.

Much of the work I was doing concerned developing an ability to listen carefully to someone else and to reflect that person's position from their point of view. My worst moment came with one question over tea: 'It's easy for me to reflect his ideas, because he's my boss. But how can he reflect mine?'

A great moment was when a participant said, 'I knew I had some problems, but now I find I have some answers as well'.

Imagine a planet where the richest and most powerful countries develop a tradition of teaching classes of a hundred students. The best educational minds of each generation apply
themselves to perfecting the best language teaching methods. One year, another planet is discovered; a poor, sparsely populated planet where life is hard and learners meet only in groups of ten.

Imagine the problems of applying good methods in these impoverished circumstances. How can one adapt the ideal groups-of-ten communing technique to a context where one has only ten individuals to work with? Every day, teachers all over this poor planet trudge to work with this and similar problems to contend with.

But why should we believe that the way ahead lies only in the application and adaptation of other people's solutions? Of course we can learn from other people, but we can best act out of an understanding of our own situation.

I don't have any understanding of the Indian situation. As I've already said, I've listened to very different understandings of the Indian situation. My guess is that there are as many different Indian situations as there are people thinking about it.

When I lived in Jordan, I heard a story about an old man who had two sons. One day, the elder son wanted to go to Damascus. The old man gave him money and his blessing. When he returned, the son said that Damascus was an awful place, full of violence, cheats, thieves and whores. 'My son,' said the old man, 'I believe you, and I am happy that you have returned to us'.

Sometime later, the second son wanted to go to Damascus. The old man gave him money and his blessing. When he returned, the son said, 'Father, Damascus is a wonderful place, full of music and art, learned discussion and endless libraries'. 'My son,' said the old man, 'I believe you, and I am happy that you have returned to us'.

We have to get beyond our isolated, individual experiences. Our way forward as teachers must surely be to meet and talk about our teaching, and then to trust each other enough to visit each other's classes. And then to talk and plan some more.

But there does need to be more. We are language teachers, for goodness' sake. Wouldn't it be irresponsible to deny the importance of written communication, or to give it up because of other people's rules of expression? In the broadest sense, we have to talk to each other. That talk has to include writing to each other. We have to keep a record. We have to keep in touch.

An idea that attracts me is a circular newsletter among teachers or teachers' groups. A teacher in one group has an idea for a lesson that he or she tries out. The teacher then writes up what happens in some kind of class report plus comments. This page or two gets passed to another teacher who tries out the idea and adds a few paragraphs of comments and suggestions based on experience. This document gets added to and passed on among teachers and/or teachers' groups.

After an agreed time or number of teachers, the report is returned to the original teacher. This person, or perhaps a colleague, undertakes to photocopy the whole document and circulate it to contributors, or, to put together a synopsis for circulation.

I think that such newsletters, working on a small scale, could contribute to the building of a fund of local knowledge. It might help bring together the knowledge we gain from reading and listening, the knowledge we gain from experience, and the knowledge we gain from trying to express ourselves to others.

On the basis of local knowledge, we might look for the development of local theory. I mean theory in the sense of an informed insider's understanding of our own situation as we live it, not as what others might wish to categorise as a set of problems according to comparison with their situation.

A very sympathetic woman with a Ph.D. in mathematical modelling told me that this is a highly idiosyncratic use of the term theory, but I can live with that as long as I find the concept defensible.

Local theory means local understanding of local data: the shared ways that insiders have of...
making sense of their experiences. Each person's experience and understanding can, if articulated, serve to illuminate the experience and understanding of another, without claiming to explain, predict or evaluate that other. As common ground and respected difference is built in one situation, the illumination of other situations becomes possible.

I understand teacher development and teachers' groups to be about our empowerment of ourselves as teachers, beyond the training courses that are arranged for us.

The idea is relatively new in ELT, and we are still developing the lines and styles of communication that will help this empowerment. I feel that we really must come to command our own lines of written communication as well as spoken.

We can learn to express ourselves in approved ways. We can also work to loosen up what is formally approved by demonstrating that we have things to say in our own ways. We can work to establish our own lines of communication and our own styles.

But one way or another, the least we can do is write to each other. It has become a part of the job.

Notes

Much of this arose out of a conversation with Robert Bellarmine. Thanks.

There's a survey of teachers' groups in India in the January 1989 issue of Focus.

The International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language has a Special Interest Group on Teacher Development which publishes its own newsletter. For more information, contact your local British Council Office, or write direct to:

IATEFL, 3 Kingsdown Chambers, Kingsdown Park, Tankerton, Whitstable, Kent CT2 2DJ, England.

Book Review


The Web of Words views the 'uneasy' relationship between the teaching of language and teaching of literature, since the two have been segregated as though there were little common ground between the two. The writers feel that literature courses have often been of survey type, based on facts about periods, writers, and their works. The emphasis has generally been on philosophy, morals and facts about life.

The Web of Words is a book with a difference. It presents language and literature teaching as an integrated process and offers the study of literature in relation to language, to use response to language as a basis for reading and appreciating literature. The book is fundamentally different from books like Understanding Poetry, Understanding Drama and Understanding Fiction by Cleanth Brooks, et. al., wherein the emphasis is on literary and inter-
pretative skills with incidental references to the use of language. Here the study of language leads to the understanding of literature with the help of preliterary techniques and procedures. The book aims to develop learners' confidence in their own understanding and appreciation of a literary text.

**The Web of Words** is a set of two books (a student's book and a teacher's book) and an audio cassette. The student book is neatly divided into 10 units. Each unit follows the general design with an Introduction to the student providing him with a focus, the 'Orientation' introduces some techniques associated with the approach and prepares the learner for the main text of the unit. Sections I, II, and III focus on the possible points of exploitation of language to appreciate the writer's intent. The section on Exploitation encourages the learner to develop a deeper understanding of the text. The summary at the end gives the main points as have emerged in the unit.

The Teacher's book gives practical suggestions to the teacher and provides a fuller rationale for each item. The cassette is meant to provide the learner with an extra perspective on the text and its interpretation.

The literary texts used in **The Web of Words** represent three genres of poetry, prose (fiction and non-fiction) and drama to familiarise the learner with conventions and forms specific to each of them. Since the emphasis is on language and style the book focuses on modern texts.

The book provides enough visual and aural stimuli along with the written text. It also allows for the selective use of the mother tongue as a practical pedagogic strategy if the teacher thinks it will facilitate discussion among the learners. **The Web of Words** keeps the difficult linguistic terminology to the minimum but allows for inevitable meta-language, more to understand what the term describes than the precise term itself. The process of learning presented in the book involves group work and interaction among peers. Besides, with its integrated approach, the book should generate a real interest in literature.

-----Vijay K. Sharma.

**Books Received (Courtesy British Council)**

1. Richard Rossner and Rod Bolitho, **Currents of Change in English Language Teaching** (Oxford : OUP, 1990), p. 268 8.95.


   Pram Mathur K. Ojha
   Vijay K. Sharma S.C. Sood

If you have formed a similar group in your region, and have some interesting experiences/information to share with FORTELL readers please do write to the Editor.

**FORTELL**

FORUM FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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1. Name
2. Address (Institution)
3. Address (Residence)
4. Telephone No. (Office) --------------------- (Res.)
5. Qualifications
6. Field of Specialisation
7. Other Fields of Interest
8. Any other Information

I enclose herewith my annual membership fee of Rs. 50/- Life Membership fee Rs. 250/- by Cheque/Demand Draft No. ____________________________ drawn on ____________________________ (Bank).

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* The fee may be paid to: Mrs. K. Ojha, Co-ordinator, Department of English,
School of Correspondence Courses, Delhi University, Delhi - 110007.

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