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(HUMANITIES)



UNIVERSITY OF THE PUNJAB  
LAHORE



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Samina Amin Qadir

## Implementation of a Reading Innovation in the Classrooms of Multan

Samina Amin Qadir

*The Reading Innovation was created and grafted onto the existing Intermediate curriculum using a less teacher-centred methodology. The research revealed that it is possible to integrate such innovations into the classroom agenda and are welcomed by the students. However, it emerged that the implementation of such programmes should involve some teacher education before being presented in the classroom. The article defines the Innovation, discusses the reason for the creation of the Innovation, the rationale for its design, the response of the students, the implementation of the Innovation in the classroom by the co-researchers and the kind of teacher education that would be supportive in the creation and implementation of such Innovations.*

### 1. Introduction

The Study Skills Option was an innovation created to find out if Study Skills could be integrated into the existing curriculum for Intermediate Pre-medical students following a communicative/interactive<sup>1</sup> methodology in the classroom. The Option comprised of three one-week modules related to dictionary use, reading techniques and organising and planning of writing. It was implemented in six colleges in and around Multan as a part of collaborative<sup>2</sup> research by six co-researchers and myself. The conception of the research tools and the process of research was a collaborative effort as is the ownership of the raw data<sup>3</sup> generated from the research. However, this interpretation of the implementation of the Reading Innovation and analysis of the data is my personal attempt.

1. The term communicative/interactive methodology is used in a very broad sense. It should not be understood as an exercise in the use of CLT in the classroom. This term implied a less teacher-centred approach where the focus shifted from the teachers to the learners.

2. Collaborative research is a form of research which minimises the distinction between 'researcher' and 'researched', in which all participants work together as co-researchers' (Ivanic, 1993, p. 103).



We were trying to investigate:

- i. How a Reading Innovation may be integrated into the existing teaching agendas of the teachers with minimal deviation from the prescribed syllabus but using a suitable teaching approach.
- ii. How would the students respond to such an Innovation.
- iii. What kind of ELT education needs to be considered when implementing such an Innovation.

All the co-researchers had at least five years experience of teaching at the Intermediate level (mostly Pre-medical classes, though the syllabus for all Intermediate classes is the same. A few of them also had some theoretical ELT background).

## 2. Definition of the Reading Innovation

The intent of the Reading innovation was not to teach the skill of reading itself but to impart a few strategies and techniques to the students of Intermediate Pre-medical to make them more effective and efficient readers. Eskey's following observation captures the tacit aspiration of the Innovation with respect to the students:

... the fluent reader is characterised by *both* skill at rapid, context-free word and phrase recognition and, at higher cognitive levels, the skillful use of appropriate comprehension strategies. For the proper interpretation of texts the latter skills are crucial, but such lower level skills as the rapid and accurate identification of lexical and grammatical forms are not merely obstacles to be cleared on the way to higher-level "guessing game" strategies, but skills to be mastered as necessary means of taking much of the guesswork out of reading comprehension. Eskey (1988, p. 98)

The implicit intent was to provide the co-researchers with an insight into some teaching strategies for reading which are easy to adopt and adapt and can be used at any level (after the beginners) and with any kinds of material available. The students see reading 'as an undifferentiated activity of verbal decoding' (Morrison, 1993, p. 158) and approach it

3. Two sets of questionnaires (Pre-Study Skills Option Questionnaire and Post-Study Skills Option Questionnaire) were prepared by us and were given to the students at the beginning and end of the Study Skills Option. These questionnaires (henceforth mentioned as Pre-SSOQ and Post-SSOQ) were also a joint effort of the co-researchers and myself.

without appropriate strategies for processing the information. The Reading Innovation was meant to provide a glimpse of such strategies.

## 3. Reasons for the creation of the Reading Innovation

There were two reasons for the creation and introduction of the Reading Innovation:

- i. The complexity of the prescribed English texts at the Intermediate level apart from the problem of studying all the science subjects in English.
- ii. The prevalent methods of teaching reading.

An elaboration of these two reasons is given below.

### 3.i Complexity of the prescribed English texts

Apart from studying all the science subjects in English, the Intermediate Pre-medical science students have a fairly advanced prescribed English course and they have to sit for two English exams called Paper A and Paper B. The prescribed course for Paper A consists of four books:

- |        |                          |
|--------|--------------------------|
| Book 1 | Essays and short stories |
| Book 2 | Essays                   |
| Book 3 | Poems and plays          |
| Book 4 | Novel                    |

Paper B is called the Language paper and has no prescribed textbook but a few recommended grammar books like that of Wren and Martin and Thompson and Martinet and some local writers.

The texts for Paper A are written by American and British writers like Stephen Leacock, Jerome K. Jerome, Sir James Jean, Katherine Anne Porter, Emily Dickinson, etc. Most of these texts have a content schema which is culturally specific and is not a part of the reader's cultural background (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1988, p. 80). These stories and essays use a lexis which is a greater source of difficulty in reading than structure (Cooper, 1984). Williams and Moran (1989) also agree that '...a student of intermediate level reading in an unfamiliar content area, will probably have more difficulty with vocabulary than structure' (p. 218). Some of the prose pieces have strong literary nuances, and are written in a highly stylised language which is no longer in use even in the



country of their origin. This impedes comprehension. This is one side of the problem. The other side is what Berman (1984) suggests: a text becomes difficult when its language displays structural properties unknown to the students, or which contrast with their native language. Thus our students are faced with a dual problem of complex lexis and complicated structures.

The students of the 1992 Dip. TEIL session<sup>4</sup> applied the readability formula known as the Fog Index to some of the Intermediate reading texts to assess their accessibility. The results showed a wide gap between the learners' reading ability and text complexity. The texts were found to be suitable for post-graduate native English speakers. They were, however, being used for Intermediate (higher secondary, year 11 and 12 in the British school system) students who studied English as a Foreign Language. Moreover, most of the readability formulae are unable to take account of the conceptual difficulty and interest level (Perera, 1983) of the students, two factors which play an important part in the classroom dynamics.

### 3.ii Teaching of Reading

As a solution to the problems discussed in the above section, Elley (1984) proposes actually more reading with 'only limited control over structure' (p.296) so that learners in effect acquire language through reading. As they become more experienced readers they can use schemata to comprehend a text. Thus even if they encounter difficult or ambiguous terms in the text, readers are able to guess the general meaning according to appropriate assumptions based on a given schema (Bensoussan, 1992, p. 102). However, in third world countries like Pakistan more reading material is either not available or is so dear that it is beyond the means of most of the learners. Moreover, there are not enough qualified teachers to run any reading programmes. With the ratio of one teacher to 300 students in better colleges and one teacher to 500 + students in most colleges, it is not possible to expect teachers to run any effective and extensive reading programmes.

4. Dip. TEIL is a teacher training programme for teachers of English in Colleges, run by the University Grants Commission, Islamabad, in co-operation with the Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, and the British Council, Islamabad.

In present times, the teachers in most boys' colleges very rarely even read or translate the prescribed texts in the class<sup>5</sup>. They either write down the summaries of the required prose passages themselves or acquire them from get-through guides in the market and dictate and explain/translate these to the students. In the girls' colleges, teachers more often translate the prose texts and recommend certain popular notes and get-through guides to the students. The same practice is followed for poetry pieces. The central idea and the paraphrase of the poems is dictated to the students. For the novel and plays the main character sketches are dictated; oft-repeated questions in the exams about the plot are also dictated if time permits. Thus the learners' reading does not even extend to the prescribed texts and is restricted to the notes of the teachers. These are usually committed to memory without any comprehension of the subject matter and reproduced verbatim in the exams. The writers of most of the get-through guides are senior English teachers in colleges. They are also the examiners or head examiners. Thus the students are assured of success if they reproduce what has been dictated by their teachers. This crushes all incentive to improve reading.

So far only teaching situation/practice has been discussed. Looking at it from the point of view of the Intermediate Pre-medical students, we know that they need facility in English not only to pass their English exam but also to comprehend and be functional in their Science subjects. But they have hardly ever been given any formalised instruction in how to be effective and efficient readers in English or in their first language.

Our students are generally not aware of the need for developing additional reading strategies. Their concern is to cram the content, and there is consequent resistance to investing effort in changing reading and study habits which they believe have served them well. Morrison, 1993, p. 159.

Alderson's (1984) conclusion that reading in L2 is both a reading problem and a language problem is upheld by the situation in

5. Most of this information has been gleaned from what the students at the now extinct English Language Centre, Bahauddin Zakaria University, Multan. This was later verified by the co-researchers and their colleagues.



Pakistan. The learners because of their inadequate knowledge of the foreign language and lack of formal reading strategies in their L1 are unable to be functional in English. They lack the 'threshold level' of linguistic competence (Alderson, 1984, p.19), to access the texts they have to deal with. Thus we get the familiar example of the student who knows all the words, the grammatical structures of a sentence or a paragraph and yet cannot comprehend what she has read. This is the result of 'learning the elements of language without understanding the processes which one utilises to communicate with those elements' (Clarke, 1988, p. 120). Such a system as ours is geared to evaluate the product, by effectively by passing the process.

This understanding about the existing patterns of teaching of reading which led to the creation of the Reading Innovation were confirmed by the students in their response to the Pre-SSQ. It had two questions related to the learning of reading. In response to questions related to being given oral instructions about reading textbooks written in English<sup>6</sup>, only 20% of the sample responded in the positive and 17% could not remember if they had ever been given such instruction. Perhaps they had not understood that this was a filter question because when asked to specify the kind of instruction given, only 11% responded as follows:

	Yes	No	Can't rememebr	No Response	Row total	Row %
Read with unders-tanding	18	1			19	7.1
Translate	3				3	1.1
Multiple readings	2	1			3	1.1
Translate & multiple reading	5				5	1.9
Not applicable	2	164	46		212	78.8
No response	24	1		2	27	10
Column total	54	167	46	2	269	100
Column %	20.1	62.1	17.1	.7		100

Table 1: Crosstabulation of stated reading techniques (in rows) with formal instruction received in reading textbooks (in columns).

6. These were questions 18 and 19 in the Pre-SSQ: 18. Where you ever given any formal instructions in reading textbooks written in English?

Yes No Can't remember

19. If yes, can you state any of the techniques you learned?

- 
- 
- 
- any other

However, the awareness of the students about the importance and relevance of reading skill was revealed by the fact that 81.4% of them considered it 'very important' to improve their ability in reading textbooks written in English and the same percentage believed that this improvement would also be helpful in their science subjects<sup>7</sup>. This information reveals the significance the students attach to proficiency in reading of texts in English.

#### 4. Designing the Reading Innovation

Keeping in mind the problems faced by the students, the academic situation and the cultural context, a Reading Innovation was designed that would not be considered threatening by the learners and would 'painlessly' impart what was being attempted. The following is a brief description of the strategies we decided to include in this innovation (the actual activities are given in the Appendix).

4.i At the end of the Dictionary Module cards were used to practice dictionary skills. Most of these exercises involved timed activities designed for consciousness-raising. (Silberstein, 1994). The objective was to push the students to look for relevant, required information in the minimum possible time. Thus scanning for required information seemed an appropriate strategy to begin the Reading Innovation. It was expected that the students would have acquired the rudiments of it with the Dictionary Module, which they could now extend to their reading in English and other science subjects. Scanning for information from the index given at the back of their Biology textbook, worksheets photocopied from the World Almanac or other similar materials could be the starting point, leading to more complex search for information from their English and Biology texts. Appropriate texts were selected and photocopied for the students to provide them with worksheets. It was suspected that most students would not have the prescribed textbooks. Therefore, it was considered advisable to provide them with the required material, rather than risk the non-availability of material.

Nuttall (1982) suggests that if students are to develop skills of scanning, they must practice on simple material. She observes:

7. Questions 20 and 21 in the Pre-SSQ: 20. How important is it for you to improve your ability to read textbooks in English?

Very important important not important at all.

21. How helpful do you think improving your reading skills in English will be in your science subjects?

Very helpful helpful not helpful at all



This is particularly important for the FL student, because he may feel insecure when you want him to stop giving equal attention to every word. ...The material you choose... must be well below the level of the current textbook. To begin with, it should contain no language difficulties at all. (p. 35).

Familiarity with the topics was the primary reason for selecting materials out of the prescribed Intermediate English textbook. The co-researchers argued that if the initial material was familiar, the students would feel confident and, more importantly, find it relevant. This would encourage them to attend the Reading Innovation classes. Material from other sources could be included later to display the versatility of the technique.

#### 4.ii Skimming

Skimming was to follow scanning. The purpose of skimming, according to Williams (1984):

is simply to see what the text is about ...the reader skims in order to satisfy a very general curiosity about the text, and not to find the answers to particular questions. (p. 97)

Williams discourages skimming at the beginning level and specifies intermediate stage as the right level to acquire this 'very useful study technique.' Nuttall (1982) defines skimming as 'glancing rapidly through a text to determine its gist ...to keep ourselves superficially informed about matters that are of not great importance to us.' (p. 34) The first quick reading could be for finding the main idea of the paragraph. If the students can find out the main ideas of successive paragraphs in a lengthy text it would be the ready-made summary of that text. It is, however, essential that students know the technique to find the main idea of a paragraph before they deal with extended prose passages. Generally a paragraph is made of one general statement usually followed by supporting details. Sometimes this statement is clearly given at the beginning of a paragraph and at other times at the end of a paragraph. However, at times it may occur in the middle of a paragraph or it may need to be inferred. These statements formulate the 'key' or the 'topic' sentences of the paragraph. All other statements in the paragraph typically justify, exemplify, explain, describe or contradict the main idea. Nuttall (1982) defines it under

'Text-attack skills' where the functional value of each sentence is identified to plot the structure of the paragraph. Equally students need to comprehend the paragraph structure to assign the value of each sentence. Going through the Intermediate prose textbooks it was discovered that there are a number of paragraphs (even in the first lesson) in which the main idea is not explicitly stated either at the beginning or the end, but is to be inferred. This inference at times also depends on the reference to the context. 'The term generally refers to the reader coming to conclusions not explicitly stated, but for which the text provides evidence.' (Williams and Moran, 1989, p. 224). Inference takes the reader beyond simple language practice and requires them to understand the relationship between one part of the text and another (Williams, 1984, p. 57). Examples from familiar texts were presented initially to the students to give them practice in finding the main idea whether it is explicitly stated or implicit in the text. Once they had grasped the idea of skimming, other non-familiar texts of comparative complexity could be introduced.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.iii Summarising

Skimming for the main idea in a paragraph should lead to skimming for important information in lengthy prose passages. Main ideas of successive paragraphs in a lengthy prose text are its summary. As making summaries is a recognised requirement of the students, they would be receptive towards learning this strategy. Swan's (1975) very popular book *Inside Meaning* gives extensive practice in making summaries of extended prose passages. The usual strategy used is asking questions on the text and the answers to these questions written together (with connectives/discourse-markers) would formulate a coherent summary. This strategy can be varied. Students can be asked to put the information in a text on a grid, or they can be given a summary in the form of a cloze. The ability to summarise a text for themselves will give the students some degree of autonomy in dealing with the text and will also help them to organise and make notes of material in their science subjects which was one of the main objectives of the Reading Innovation.

8. Inference, another reading skill prominent in most of the EFL/ESL textbooks, could not be dealt with exclusively due to the shortage of time. My co-researchers decided to explain it in passing while talking about skimming for the main idea and then giving examples of it from the selected passages. They felt that scanning, skimming for the main idea and summarising made a neater package with the one thing following another sequentially. Dealing with inference separately would a) break the sequence and b) take away time from activities which they considered more relevant to the needs of the students.



This was the basic design of the Reading Innovation. The co-researchers had selected a range of activities to implement this design (see Appendix).

### 5. Response of the Students to the Reading Innovation

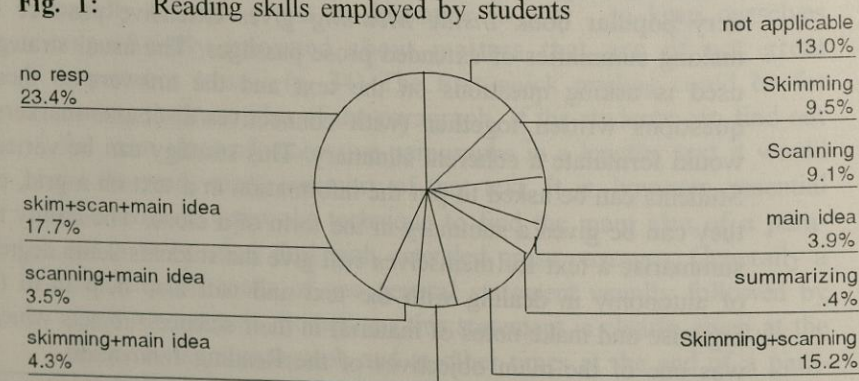
The response of the students to the Reading Innovation was quite positive. This becomes apparent from their answers to the questions in the Post-SSOQ. 65% students in this sample said that they had used at least a few of the reading techniques taught to them. 13% denied having used any. 56.3% had used a few strategies for studying their science subjects also.<sup>9</sup>

	Most of them	A few of them	None at all	No response
Used reading techniques	7.7%	65%	13%	4.3%
Used reading techniques for science subjects	8.2%	56.3%	26.8%	8.7%

**Table 2:** Using reading strategies for studying English and science subjects (questions in the Post-SSOQ).

Some of the co-researchers verified that they had seen the students practicing these strategies in dealing with their texts. Skimming, scanning, and looking for the main idea were the most popular and commonly used techniques mentioned in response to question 12 in the Post-SSOQ<sup>10</sup> (see fig. 1).

**Fig. 1:** Reading skills employed by students



9. Questions 11 and 13 in Post-SSOQ: 11 Have you used any of the reading techniques taught to you during this course? Most of them a few of them none at all. Q. 13. Have you used any of these techniques for studying your science texts? Most of them a few of them none at all.

10. Question 12 in the Post-SSOQ: Q. 12. If you have used any of these techniques, name them? a b c d. any other

The number of students who did not respond to question 12 after claiming that they had used these techniques is a bit perturbing. The questionnaire required the students to name the techniques they had used. 23.4% did not respond. This made the response to questions 11 and 12 in the Post-SSOQ a bit doubtful and difficult to interpret. May be they had used a mixture of techniques and did not know how to convey this information; or may be they could not name the techniques they had used; or may be were just not bothered to respond. It can also be inferred that they were not completely truthful in their response to question 11.

Another important reason for the positive response of the students to the Reading Innovation was also due to the relatively new teaching methodology adopted in the classroom. The students enjoyed the interaction in the classroom as it encouraged their participation in the learning process. This is revealed by their overwhelmingly positive response to the question related to the use of Pair/group work in the classroom. All the co-researchers also reiterated the fact that the students had voiced their appreciation of the newer approach to teaching/learning and had requested their teachers to follow the same approach in their regular teaching sessions also.

### 6. Implementation of the Reading Innovation

The understanding of the implementation of the Reading Innovation by the co-researchers in the classroom is primarily based on the tape recording of the third day of the teaching of the Reading Innovation. Some impressions about the interpretation of the Reading Innovation were also gathered from what was said in the informal interview or at the time of the interview and during our various interactions in the respective colleges. All that can be said about the reliability of the tapes is that the female co-researchers confessed that they had rehearsed their classes before taping the reading activity. The male co-researchers had not done so.

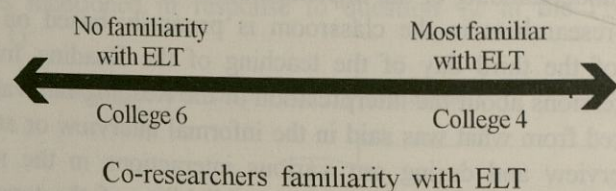
The tape from each co-researcher is based on the reading activity related to 'Skimming for the main idea'. The reasons for recording the third session of the week was that it would give both the students and the co-researchers the opportunity to settle down with the topic and feel confident about taping. however, the tapes of all the co-researchers related to the Reading Innovation are slick and brief, allowing no time for reflection or work. Listening to these tapes is like watching a movie on the video on 'Fast Forward'.



### 6.i Vertical analysis of the teaching of co-researchers in College 4 and 6

Before discussing the adaptation and adoption of the Reading Innovation with reference to all the co-researchers, I would like to present a vertical analysis of the teaching of two of my co-researchers, one male and one female in Colleges 4 and 6 respectively. The reasons for presenting this analysis are:

- i. The co-researcher in College 4 had been amongst the first few teachers in the country to successfully complete his Post-graduate Diploma in ELT<sup>11</sup> though he had no practical experience of teaching language-oriented classes.
- ii. On the other hand, the co-researcher in College 6 had no familiarity with ELT. She was the only co-researcher who had never attended any seminar, conference or course related to linguistics or ELT, nor had any other English teacher from her college. Now most of the Master's programmes in English Literature include two compulsory courses related to Phonetics and Linguistics. This was not the case in her time. If we consider the language teaching situation in Pakistan along a continuum then the teachers in College 4 and 6 belong to either ends of it.



However none of them had ever used the communicative/interactive teaching methods in their classrooms nor had they ever taught Study Skills or language related materials. In practical experience they were equals though in theoretical knowledge they differed. It brings out clearly how only an awareness of ELT paradigms creates a difference in the interpretation of an Innovation.

### 6.i.a Co-researcher in College-4

He was the only co-researcher who allowed me to sit in his class and personally observe and record his teaching session. The classroom

11. This Diploma was conducted by the Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, in 1981-82.

performance of the teacher in College 4 was par excellence. It was almost flawless and could have been video-recorded as a model language teaching session for trainee teachers. He taught the activity sheduled for Day 3 (see Appendix). It was related to skimming for the main idea. He began by recapitulation of the previous day's lesson, related it to students' experience and then proceeded to introduce the new activity first in English and then in L1. His balancing of L1 and L2 displayed a sensitivity to the needs of his students. The code-switching was participant-related, that is, hearer-oriented. It took account of the hearer's linguistic preferences or competences and their differing language abilities and communicative repertoires (Martin-Jones, 1995). He had prepared cards as aids to skimming.

He reinforced the skimming techniques, elicited responses from the students, encouraged them to participate in the activity and made extensive use of the blackboard. His behaviour throughout the class remained friendly though distant. It was a truly interactive/communicative class. However, his mobility was confined to the front of the class only, though he had ample space to move around if he had wanted to.

It was a very polished performance and even if it was orchestrated for my benefit, it displayed an awareness of ELT techniques and strategies. He had taken the basic plan, incorporated examples from the life of his students and made it into an experience to which they could relate. I was very encouraged by it.

The practice of actual teaching can be improved by making teachers aware of the options open to them and the principles by which they can evaluate the alternatives. Ellis, 1990, p. 27.

He was willing to adopt the new teaching methods remaining within the confines of his prescribed course.

## 6.i.b. Co-researcher in College 6

The teacher in College 6 had arranged for a recording technician from a video/audio cassette shop to record her class. She wanted everything to be 'right' for the research. Her class was obviously well-rehearsed. There are too many incongruities in the recording of the class session to make it appear a natural performance.



There was no code-switching (see section 6.ii.a) in her class. Only twice did she utter two fragments of sentences in L1 to remind the students about an explanation given earlier. Apparently she had explained the worksheets to the students in L1 and then rehearsed them in English. The recording was the third time that the students were exposed to the same material. The entire class tape is of 18 minutes whereas the normal class period is of 45 minutes duration.

The activity was related to skimming for main ideas in passages. She very briefly recapitulated her last lesson on scanning and moved forward to explain the concept of skimming to the students. The explanation was brief and teacher-centred. The activity consisted of six passages that the students had to skim for the main idea. She mainly asked two students (roll number 4 and 7) to read aloud each passage. All turns at reading were initiated by direct nomination of the teacher. At the end of each passage, she elicited the main idea from the students by a 'general solicitation' after repeating the information that it is either at the beginning or at the end of a paragraph. The responses to this general solicitation also seemed to be coming from the same two students who did the reading (the voices on tape sound the same, and also twice she addressed the students by their roll number to stand while responding; once the roll number was 7 and at another time it was 4). Occasionally a third voice could also be heard responding to a question. This voice was never addressed by a name or a roll number. This student appears to.

speak without waiting for a solicitation of any kind. And also, just occasionally, ...steal a turn intended for someone else. Allwright and Bailey, 1991, p. 124.

Most probably these were the English medium students in her class. Their pronunciation was good and they read fluently. No other student was nominated to respond to the questions about the main idea. The co-researcher's justification for these nominations was that they were the only ones to raise their hands. In Slimani's study (1987) the most proficient learners interacted more frequently than their less proficient classmates. Maybe the more proficient learners in her class were interacting more frequently. Maybe she had rehearsed and instructed them to respond.

She had asked the students to read aloud the passages to skim for the main idea because she had a tape running in the background. She did

not want to have a tape which had long pauses and silences. Most of the co-researchers had been nervous about the tape recorder running in the background during their first recording and had hastened the responses of the students without giving them the time to reflect. But all of them had tried to preserve the essence of the activity. The teacher in College 6 explained, that reading aloud had made the class 'more interactive'. The students were participating more than their usual classroom routine. Normally, she would have read the passages herself. It makes one ponder about her interpretation of the activity and of the concept of skimming. Loud reading retards speed, even sub-vocalizing is discouraged during scanning and skimming activities.

This analysis of the two co-researchers on either end of the ELT continuum reveals the discrepancy in their interpretation and implementation of the Innovation. The awareness of ELT paradigms helped the co-researcher in college 4 to interpret the activity in its true spirit. The lack of awareness of such pedagogical skills on the part of the co-researcher in college 6 led to a mismatch in the interpretation of the activity and its actual purpose.

## 6.ii. Analysis of the teaching of all the co-researchers

Most of the co-researchers adopted the suggested activity and adapted the teaching of it for their classroom purposes by keeping its concept intact. Most of them added a number of their own examples.

Table 3. indicates how the activity was implemented in the class by the co-researchers.

Characteristics	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4	College 5	College 6
Code-switching	Extensive L1-L2-L1	Balanced L2-L1-L2	Very extensive L1-L2-L1	Balanced L2-L1-L2	Extensive	none, L2 only
Interaction	Teacher-centred	Teacher-centred	Balanced but teacher-led	Balanced, but teacher-led	Teacher-centred	Teacher-centred
Elicitations	Few general solicits followed by open response	Few general solicits, some teacher nominations	General solicits followed by open response	General solicits followed by open response	Few general solicits followed by Open response	General solicits, teacher nominations

Table 3. Implementation of the activity 'Skimming for the main idea'.



As the table reveals, the implementation of the activity in the classroom is interpreted according to the classroom practices of the co-researchers. A simple criteria was established to see if a more student-centred approach was followed involving interaction and elicitation of student response. Code-switching has been discussed to see the general pattern of language use in the classroom. A detailed description of these criteria is as follows.

#### **6.ii.a Code-switching**

Teacher in College 1 mostly explained the activity to the students in L1. Occasionally he reiterated a point in English most probably to reinforce it. The code-switching was intra-sentential as well as inter-sentential in either language. Guthrie (1984, p. 45) has identified five communicative functions for code-switching into L1 in the classroom. They are: (1) for translation, (2) as a we-code, (3) for procedures and directions (4) for clarification, (5) to check for understanding. Contrary to Guthrie's findings, the teacher in college 1 used English for procedures and directions. All the imperatives were in English.

Raise your hands please. Start reading now. Tell me the answer. May be felt that English added extra force to his words because it is considered the language of power or because it emphasised the social distance between him and the students and was a reaffirmation of his authority in the class<sup>12</sup>.

Code-switching in College 2 was far more balanced. She used some English words in her explanations in L1 but rarely did she use any L1 words when talking in English. Her tape has long spells of uninterrupted teacher-talk in English, followed by a brief recapitulation of the same in L1. She also used L1 to check for understanding and sometimes as a we-code (Guthrie, 1984). She was following the pattern identified by Lin (1990, p. 116) of ensuring 'through understanding of the teaching points by reiterating and elaborating them in L1 between the L2 initial and final presentations'.

Co-researcher in College 3 used English only to read out the few instructions related to the activity worksheet. Even the questions based on

12. In my school days all reprimands were in English, even in the L1 class, to make them appear more formal and authoritative. This custom continues to this day in English medium schools (confirmed at my daughter's school) and it seems the English teachers have carried it over to the colleges.

the activity were asked in Urdu, though at times she did read out the English version of the same. Her entire class was conducted in Urdu. It is a moot point if her students understood the concept of skimming in the much broader sense of a linguistic acquisition to be used for reading across languages than just as a means of facilitating reading of texts in English? They certainly responded to the questions enthusiastically and in English and their response sounds fairly spontaneous even on a well-rehearsed tape. If the students understood the concept, then she had achieved the objectives of the exercise.

In College 5, the teacher used a lot of L1 in his classroom and for all the purposes identified by Guthrie. His students too responded enthusiastically to the activity. In College 6 as has been discussed the teacher did not switch languages in this class. She had scrupulously cleansed her language of any code-switching. This makes her classroom performance quite unreal in her academic and cultural context.

Code-switching emerged as a norm of the teaching process. When the teacher in college 6 refrained from it, her class session sounded artificial. The basic purpose of code-switching was to facilitate comprehension but maybe some teachers also used it to disguise their lack of proficiency in spoken English.

#### **6.ii.b Interaction in the classroom: a giant leap in faith?**

A thorough disussion of the interactive/communicative methoology had preceded the implementation of the option. Some co-researchers had hinted that they had fairly interactive classrooms in the sense that the format was not entirely teacher-centred. I would like to reiterate here that the term communicative is being used in a very broad sense and is not to be confused with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The research is not related to CLT nor did we have the time or the intention to provide the theoretical underpinnings of this methodology. In our discussions the term communicative was used in conjunction with interactive to imply an ease in communication in the classroom; both between students and teachers and among students themselves. At the same time it seemed to provide a reason for the interaction in the classroom. The co-researchers too were interested in the methodological aspects of running an interactive classroom. Some of them had been introduced to it during their ELT-related courses. But none of them had used the methodology in their own classrooms. The only communicative use of language in the traditional English classrooms was to ask the students to open their books at a certain page.



Most of the co-researchers had teacher-centred classrooms while teaching the Option. None of the class sessions on tape can be identified as student-centred. They are more or less teacher-centred in varying degrees. The class began with the teacher's explanation of the activity and its purpose (objectives) and applicability followed by the activity itself. This explanation in itself was a novel concept for most of the teachers. They had never rationalised the purpose of teaching any grammatical or literary concept or text for their students. That it was a part of the prescribed course was explanation enough.

You are making life tough for us. Next they will want to know why I am teaching the boring 'The dying sun'. I do not know why (translation of the remark of the teacher in college 3<sup>13</sup>).

Most of the co-researchers considered the rendering of this explanation as student-centred. From a state of no explanation whatsoever to a state of explanation of purpose, reason and application is a tremendous leap in faith. Most probably 'student-centred class' was interpreted to mean a class where students were the focus as opposed to a text or grammatical point. The co-researchers did not see interaction as implying any mutual exchange between the students and teacher or the students themselves. Even in the classes where the interaction was more balanced, it should not be inferred that the students volunteered any opinion. Rather the teachers elicited their opinion more often. The students spoke only when asked. The teacher talk even in these classes predominated for more than three-quarters of the class time.

The teacher firmly controls the allocation of turns to talk, and talks for longer at each of his/her entries, although there do appear to be individual variations in this respect. Pupils typically respond to teacher initiatives and do so briefly. ...Language teaching has long been recognised as teacher-centred. Westgate, et al., 1985, p. 273.

The feedback from the students (in the Post-Study skills Questionnaire and during our sporadic and spasmodic meetings in the corridors of the colleges) shows that even this little digression from the teacher's

13. To make the voices of the co-researchers clearly audible, their remarks are given in bold print.

full-frontal role was much welcome. The co-researchers also expressed their satisfaction with their new interaction roles, two of them aiming to continue it in their other classes after the summer vacations.

One interesting feature which emerges quite clearly from the tapes of the reading activity is that when the students did respond and committed an error in their response, the teachers hardly ever treated these errors. Only the teacher in College 5 treated the errors twice by repeating the student's sentence with the substituted correct word. There could be multiple reasons for this lack of treatment of errors. The most obvious one is that most probably the teachers did not notice the errors made by their students.

Non-native teachers cannot be expected to treat errors that they cannot detect. A non-native teacher's own target language grammar may not include all the phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactical or discourse rules needed to recognise and treat all the errors in the learner's output. Allwright and Bailey, 1991, p. 102.

But usually the more proficient students were more willing to respond in the class and fewer errors occurred.

In the ultimate analysis all that can be said about the classroom interaction is that though it was not student-centred, it did involve student participation. This was a breaking away from the norm in most cases both for the students and the teachers and perhaps led to awareness-raising among the co-researchers and may be some of their colleagues about trying alternative methods of teaching without a loss of teacher-control (a grave fear amongst the teachers) in the classroom. Some change did occur in the classroom; if the situation in the classroom did not become learner-centred, at least it became learning centered.

A learning-centred classroom carries learners towards the ability to make critical pedagogical decisions by systematically training them in the skills they need to make such decisions. ...Learners are therefore systematically educated in the skills and knowledge they will need in order to make informed choices about what they want to learn and how they want to learn. Rather than assuming that the learner comes to the learning arrangement with critical learning skills,



the sensitive teacher accepts that many learners will only begin to develop such skills in the course of instruction. Nunan, 1995, p. 134.

#### **6.ii.c. Elicitations**

Generally teachers in the class ask their students some comprehension questions related to meaning of vocabulary items. Usually these questions are 'thrown' at the class as a warning if they are getting restive and are not really meant to give them a feeling of participation in the teaching/learning process. While teaching the Reading Innovation, all the co-researchers tried to elicit responses from their students in their own way. However, in the case of College 2 occasionally and College 6 mostly, the general solicits were followed by teacher nominations. The teachers named only the English-medium girls to respond because they wanted the taped session to reflect only the best in their classroom. Though the other co-researchers did not nominate students, they had a fairly good response to their solicitation. At the same time, however, some of the co-researchers did not give sufficient time to the students to reflect and respond to a question. It is particularly important in a situation where the students are not familiar with this interactional process. May be it was the tape running in the background which made them nervous and pushed them into providing prompts to urge their student to respond. It clearly comes across in some taped sessions of the reading activity that the students were not given enough time to understand the question and think out a response. The teacher's prompt at times dried up an emerging response.

Only in College 3 the teacher waited for her students to frame their responses. Her students competed to respond and their response is always in English. As she had rehearsed this teaching session with the students before recording it may be the students were more sure of their role and responded with more confidence or may be her relaxed explanations in L1 had encouraged them to participate. Most of her questions were also in L1. Though the teacher in College 5 did not give as much time to his students to respond as the one in College 3, yet his students also vied with one another to respond and may be for the same reason. His explanations were also almost exclusively in L1 and this minimised the comprehension problem.

The class in College 6 comes forth as the most stilted as the teacher gives no time to the students to respond to her questions (other reasons discussed in section 6.i. b).

The teaching of the co-researcher in College 4 has already been discussed in section 6.i. a. His students responded quickly and willingly to his elicitation. He explained that one reason for the prompt response could be the availability of the material before them. Normally, his students did not bother to buy or bring their books to the classroom (they usually bought the teacher's notes). Now they had the worksheets before them and this made it easier for them to respond.

#### **6.ii.d Other factors related to the implementation of the Reading Innovation.**

The co-researchers' perceptions of gender roles emerge in the implementation of the Reading Innovation. Female co-researchers used examples related to sowing and cooking, while the male co-researchers used examples of driving and riding a bicycle (still very much a male domain in Pakistan).

Teachers in colleges 3 and 6 were the two co-researchers with minimum personal input in the explanation. Teachers in colleges 4 and 5 respectively not only provided related examples from life but also made exophoric references to shared information in the classroom. This seemed to relate and integrate the material into what had already been experienced by the students. It was a good teaching strategy because it led to a further perking up of interest in classroom.

The co-researcher in College 3 also introduced her own examples. As all the excerpts in this exercise were taken from the textbooks of the students, she also made some anaphoric references to jog the memory of her students.

Teacher in College 1 was unique among the co-researchers as he used this material to refresh the memory of the students about the grammatical points he had taught. He digressed a lot from the topic at hand and talked about scanning (the topic covered in the previous session) and also referred to some pronunciation lessons he had prepared and taught to his students earlier. It is difficult to understand his reasons for doing so. Among all the co-researchers who taught the Innovation, he was the one who had attended the most recent and up-market Diploma programme related to teaching English as a Foreign Language. He had participated in video-taped micro-teaching sessions and was familiar with the concept of adapting teaching materials to suit his own needs. May be he talked about his previous teaching to bring it on record that he had



successfully done so. His students always responded to his elicitations and he usually gave them sufficient time to respond without any prompts. He quickly got over the requirements of the activity for each part and then spent some time in discussing some pronunciation or grammatical factor in that part. It seemed as if he was deliberately trying to diffuse the focus from skimming for the main idea and teach a number of other things at the same time.

This is an overview of the way in which the third day's activity in the Reading Innovation was implemented in the colleges. May be these tapes are not representative of the other days. It is quite possible that the other activities were implemented in a more natural manner, using the entire allocated class time. Teachers in College 3 and 5, who used a lot of L1 in the classroom have longer tapes than others. Teacher in College 6 because of her monolingual delivery in English has the briefest tape followed by the teacher in college 1.

#### **7. Co-researchers views about ELT training**

The co-researchers, in various interactions and in their informal interviews, emphasized that they had enjoyed the interactive class sessions and one of them had even experienced the urge to continue with this methodology in his other classes. Some co-researchers talked about the creativity of this method while others mentioned its learner-friendliness. Compared to the norm of their teaching situation, the classes during the Innovation were slightly less teacher-centred and a little more student-centred. Actually the classes were what Nunan (1995) calls learning-centred.

All of them unanimously expressed their need to use ready-made materials in the classroom initially till they gained the confidence to design/create the materials themselves. They were quite open about their lack of expertise in preparing such materials though all of them were sure that with proper guidance eventually they would be able to design/select such innovations collectively and individually. The kind of guidance/training that would be required was something they could not define except in very broad terms. The lack of awareness about the metalanguage related to issues about teacher education/training was quite apparent even in the responses of the teachers who had undergone some kind of ELT training.

The co-researchers discussed the kind of ELT training that would be supportive of integrating/introducing such innovations in the classroom.

They were sure that something more was needed than the 'the apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975).

There are ways in which being a student is like serving an apprenticeship in teaching; students have protracted face-to-face and consequential interactions with established teachers. Lortie, 1975, p. 61.

Elbaz (1983, p. 47), has also noted the powerful influence of this past experience which teachers bring with them into the classroom.

a stock of knowledge-in-use developed from their previous experience as students and from the variety of informal teaching situations which abound in everyday life.

The co-researchers, however, were aware that some kind of pedagogical knowledge would go a long way in making them efficient teachers and communicators. Most of them were in favour of pre-service training so that the new teachers could start their career as classroom practitioners backed by a solid knowledge of pedagogy. All of them expressed their willingness to attend in-service courses, circumstances permitting.

#### **8. Conclusion**

The response of the students indicates that they found the Innovations meaningful and relevant to their needs. They were even more attracted by the communicative/interactive methodology involving pair/group work and wanted all the teachers to adopt this methodology as a regular feature of their teaching. The Innovation was based on the existing curriculum therefore the students did not find it a digression from their main focus and considered it a tool meant to facilitate learning.

The attitude of the teachers was cautious initially but became more enthusiastic with the positive response of the students and with the increase in their own confidence as the teaching of the Innovation progressed.

The Reading Innovation was grafted on to an existing curriculum and was well-received by all parties concerned. Its main contribution was awareness-raising among the teachers that alternative teaching methodologies based on the prescribed syllabus may be applied successfully in the classroom but some kind of ELT background would help in creation and implementation of such innovations.



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## APPENDIX

### SCANNING ACTIVITY - I

- |     |            |            |             |          |
|-----|------------|------------|-------------|----------|
| (a) | effect     | 83         | response    | shaping  |
|     | organisms  | Einstein   | linguistics | Cortes   |
|     | Henry VIII | rock music | 30,000      | behavior |
|     | 100        | history    | Pavlov      | 32       |
|     | Skinner    | 24         | psychology  | Castro   |
|     | Chomsky    | stimulus   | box         | average  |
- (b) The first permanent settlement by a European country was finally established in 1608. Previously, there had been several unsuccessful attempts in various areas by both the English and the French. This settlement, which was located where Quebec City now stands, was founded by Samuel de Champlain. It was originally the property of a French fur-trading company. France began to take an interest in her colony in North America over fifty years later. In 1663, Louis XIV took control of the colony away from the fur-trading company. He established a local government consisting of a governor, a bishop and an intendant. By this time, there were three permanent settlements. A settlement where Montreal now stands was founded in 1642 by de Maisonneuve. There was also the original settlement at Quebec City and a third at Trois Rivieres. The total population of the three settlements numbered less than three thousand.
- (c) From the very beginning, there was rivalry between the English and the French in Canada. This was partly as a result of the fur trade, but primarily as an extension of the fight for supremacy by the two great powers. As a result of the conflicts in Europe, France slowly lost all her rights to Canada. The first settlement that France handed over to England was Acadia, the area which is now known as Nova Scotia. This action was part of the conditions of the Treaty of Utrecht. This was the Treaty that ended the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713.

Long et.al. Reading English  
for Academic Study



## SCANNING ACTIVITY - II

### QUICK REFERENCE INDEX

ACTORS AND ACTRESSES .....	385-399	MANUFACTURES .....	102-109
ADDENDA, CHANGES .....	33-34	MAPS (COLOR) .....	517-528
AEROSPACE .....	482-488	MAYORS, CITY MANAGERS .....	43-46
AGRICULTURE .....	454-469	MEDICAL DEVELOPMENTS, 1973 .....	492
AMBASSADORS AND MINISTERS .....	821-822	MEMORABLE DATES .....	841-873
ANIMALS .....	493-496	METEOROLOGICAL DATA .....	258-268
ART, FAMOUS .....	480-481	METRIC SYSTEM .....	325, 1039
ASS'NS AND SOCIETIES .....	269-283	MINERAL PRODUCTION .....	108-109, 114-115
ASTRONOMICAL DATA, 1974 .....	221-257	NATIONAL DEFENSE .....	497-510
AUTOMOBILE TRAVEL HIGHWAYS .....	131-141	NATIONAL PARKS .....	747-749
AWARDS, MEDALS, PRIZES .....	403-415	NATIONS OF THE WORLD .....	529-619
BOOKS, BEST SELLERS .....	476	NEWS, LATE .....	33-34
CABINETS, U.S. .... 796-800, 818-821		PASSPORTS .....	142-144
CALENDARS .....	237-252	PATENTS, COPYRIGHT LAWS .....	339-340
CANADA .....	529-541	PERSONAL FINANCE .....	55-79
CHRONOLOGY, 1973 .....	979-1014	PERSONALITIES, NOTED .....	361-401
CITIES OF NORTH AMERICA .....	930-687	POPULATION, NATIONS OF THE .....	529-618
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES .....	284-307	WORLD .....	
CONGRESS, NINETY-THIRD, .....	830-834	WORLD CITIES .....	628-629
2nd SESSION 1973 LAWS .....	53	POPULATION, U.S. .... 146-220	
CONSTITUTION OF THE U.S. .... 754-762		POSTAL INFORMATION .....	1033-1039
CONSUMER AFFAIRS .....	55-57, 77-78	PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS .....	766-793
CORPORATIONS, STOCKS .....	94-95	PRESIDENTS, U.S. .... 802-815	
DAMS, RESERVOIRS, RIVERS .....	447-451	RECORDINGS (DISCS, TAPES) .....	474-476
DETH ROLL, 1973 .....	50-52	RELIGIOUS INFORMATION .....	341-358
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE .....	751-752	SOCIAL SECURITY .....	58-61
DISASTERS .....	874-881	SPACE DEVELOPMENTS .....	482
DISCOVERIES AND INVENTIONS .....	336-338	SPORTS .....	884-978
ECONOMICS .....	80-101	STATES OF THE UNION .....	706-733
EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS .....	284-321	STRATEGIC ARMS .....	504-505
ELECTIONS, 1972 .....	764-793	SUPREME COURT DECISIONS .....	54
ENERGY .....	110-118	SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS .....	471-472
ENVIRONMENT .....	489-496	TAXATION .....	55-69
FIRST AID .....	1040	THEATER, OPERA, FILMS .....	470-477
FLAG, U.S. .... 511-512		TRADE AND TRANSPORTATION .....	119-141
FLAQS OF WORLD (COLOR) .....	513-516	UNITED NATIONS .....	621-624
HEADS OF STATE .....	626-627	U.S. GOVERNMENT .....	796,800, 818-821
HOLIDAYS .....	359-360	VICE PRESIDENTS, U.S. .... 794-796	
INCOME TAX, FEDERAL .....	58-60	VIETNAM WAR .....	48
STATE (Sales Tax) .....	64-68	VITAL STATISTICS .....	1015-1032
INFLATION .....	55-57, 80-81	WASHINGTON, THE NATION'S CAPITAL .....	685-694
INVENTIONS AND DISCOVERIES .....	336-338	ATERGATE .....	37-41
JUDICIARY, U.S. .... 823-825		WEIGHTS, MEASURES, NUMBERS .....	325-335, 1039
LAWS AND DOCUMENTS .....	339, 751-763	WOMEN IN 1973 .....	882-883
		WORLD FACTS .....	416-451
		ZIP CODES .....	166-202, 220

1. If you wanted to learn about world religious, where might you begin your search?
2. Where could you find information on the current population of your country?
3. Where would you look to find information on the Chinese lunar calendar?
4. Where would you look to find a map of Africa?

The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1974 edition; Copyright © Newspaper Enterprise Association, New York, 1973.

## SCANNING ACTIVITY - III

1. He waited a moment in surprise, wondering why she did not come nearer, and then maddened by hunger; he dived at the fish. With a loud scream he fell outwards and downwards into space. His mother had swooped upwards. As he passed beneath her he heard the swish of her wings.
2. In the year 1271, the five adventurers set sail from Venice in a ship whose high fore-castle and brightly coloured sails would seem to us gay and attractive — but we should find the inside of the ship less pleasant. The cabins were small, dark and ill-smelling, the food was bad, and the ship tossed terribly when the wind blew. But at last, the travellers reached Laiassus on the shore of the Mediterranean, and from there they set off overland to reach the court of the great Emperor.
3. In the stories of our boyhood in which Ned figures, there was no such thing as a heroine, or practically none. At best she was brought in as an afterthought. It was announced on page 301 that at the close of Ned's desperate adventures in the West Indies he married the beautiful daughter of Don Deigo, the Spanish governor of Portbello; or else, at the end of the great war with Napoleon, that he married a beautiful and accomplished French girl whose parents had perished in the revolution.
4. Another part of the training was preparation for being weightless. The flights of Gagarin and Titov had shown that the human body reacted well when it was beyond, the pull of gravity, but life where everything weighed nothing needed getting used to. A catapult device, with a sudden burst of acceleration, made the students weightless for a few seconds, and they learned to squeeze foods and liquids into their mouths from tubes, the only way to eat in space.
5. And the organ peeled forth and the young voices of the choir sounded so soft and pure. The bright warm sunshine streamed in through the church-windows to the place where Karen was sitting. Her heart was so full of sunshine and peace and joy that at last it broke, and her soul flew on the sunbeams to heaven, where there was no one to ask about the red shoes.



6. Using biological names is necessary for scientific exactness because of several reasons. First, there is no other single set of names available for all organisms. Second different languages have different names for the same organism. For example, the same plant is known as gajor in Urdu, carrot in English, mohrrube in German and zana in Spanish. Whereas it is known by its biological name *Daucus carota* throughout the world. Third, same word may refer to different organisms.

## SCANNING ACTIVITY - IV

### FINDING THE MAIN IDEA

Some people are never right. They never have good luck. They always have bad luck. They usually do the wrong things. They always have problems. They often break things. They sometimes miss buses and airplanes. My brother, however, is different. He is usually right. He is seldom wrong. He usually has good luck. He seldom has problems. He never breaks things. He never misses buses or airplanes. He knows almost everything. He doesn't ask questions; he answers them. He never says, "I don't know."

The main idea of this passage is:

- a. the bad luck of some people
  - b. the good luck of my brother
  - c. problems of luck.
2. It is interesting to visit another country, but there are sometimes problems when we don't know the language very well. It may be difficult to talk with the people there. We may not know how to use the telephone in the country we are visiting. We may not know how to buy the things we need. In a strange country we might not know where to eat or what to order in a restaurant. When we need help, we might not know how to ask for help. It is not pleasant to have an experience like that. After a short time, however, we learn what to do and what to say. We learn to enjoy life in another country, and then we may be sorry to leave.
- The main idea of the passage is:
- a. initial (ابتدائی) problems of life in another country
  - b. joys of living in another country
  - c. learning to live in another country
3. Language is human speech, either written or spoken. There are about three thousand spoken languages in the world, but some are spoken by only a few hundred people. All languages have (1) a system of sounds, (2) words, (3) a system of word order, and (4) grammar. Word order is more important in English than in some other languages. The sound system is very important in Chinese and in many African languages.



The main idea of this passage is:

- a. human speech is language
- b. animals do not have a language
- c. language and its composition (بناوٹ)

4. The Amnesty International was started in 1961. It has 200,000 members. Its aim is to help people who are put in prison only because of their race, their religion, or their beliefs. They neither used violence nor suggested that others use it. There are over half a million of these prisoners. So far, thousands of prisoners have been freed. Hundreds of others have received better food, visits from their families, or medical care.

The main idea of this passage is:

- a. to tell us about the birth of Amnesty International
- b. to tell us about Amnesty International and its purpose
- c. to tell us about the success of the Amnesty International

5. People cry when they feel very bad. They cry when something terrible happens, like a death in the family. They cry in sorrow when a close friend has a death in the family. They cry when they feel very sad or very angry. They cry when they feel that they cannot do anything about a problem, and feel helpless. People also cry when they feel very good. They cry when they have been very worried about something but find out everything is all right. They cry when something wonderful happens.

The main idea of this passage is:

- a. people cry when they feel bad and when they feel good
- b. people cry when something wonderful happens
- c. crying can be controlled

#### Finding The Main Idea (teaching suggestions)

The strategy is that the students read each paragraph individually and tick mark the correct answer. The teacher discusses each paragraph and gives reasons why a particular answer is correct or otherwise. An answer may be correct in itself but if it is not based on the information contained in the paragraph then it has to be ignored. It is to be stressed for the students that they have to find the main idea from the paragraph

itself and not base it on their external knowledge. The students should be given five minutes per paragraph for reading and ticking the correct answer. The correct answers are as follows:

1.
  - a. is partial information and is ignoring the main gist of the passage.
  - b. is the correct answer as other details support it.
  - c. is irrelevant.
2.
  - a. is the right answer as it deals with the thought supported by other sentences in the paragraph.
  - b. is not discussed in this paragraph.
  - c. is the same.
3.
  - a. is partial information only. It discusses only one part of what is said in the paragraph.
  - b. is not applicable in this case.
  - c. is the correct answer as this is what the paragraph is about.
4.
  - a. is partial information and deals with only part of the paragraph. The other details do not support it as the main idea.
  - b. is the correct answer as it gives a complete idea about what is said in the para.
  - c. is again partial information and deals with only a part of the passage.
5.
  - a. is the right answer as it encapsulates what is said in the passage.
  - b. is clearly partial information as it ignores a large part of the material contained in the rest of the passage.
  - c. is irrelevant with respect to this paragraph.

These passages are taken/adapted from:

1. Ackert, Patricia 1982 *Insights and Ideas, A Beginning Reader for Students of English as a Second Language*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.
2. Allen, Virginia French 1978 *A Reading Sampler, Progressive Reading series Book 1*, English Teaching Division, Educational and Cultural Affairs, International Communication Agency, Washington, D.C.



## **SCANNING ACTIVITY - V**

### **STUFFED TROUT**

If ever you have an evening to spare, up the river, I should advise you to drop into one of the little village inns, and take a seat in the tap-room. You will be nearly sure to meet one or two old rod-men, and they will tell you enough fishy stories in half an hour to give you indigestion for a month.

George and I — I don't know what had become of Harris; he had gone out and had a shave, early in the afternoon, and had then come back and spent full forty minutes in pipe-claying his shoes, we had not seen him since — George and I, therefore, and the dog left to ourselves, went for a walk to Wallingford on the second evening, and, coming home, we called in at a little riverside inn, for a rest, and other things.

We went into the parlour and sat down. There was an old fellow there, smoking a long clay pipe, and we naturally began chatting.

He told us that it had been a fine day today, and we told him that it had been a fine day yesterday, and then we all told each other that we thought it would be a fine day tomorrow; and George said the crops seemed to be coming up nicely.

After that it came out, somehow or other, that we were strangers in the neighbourhood, and that we were going away the next morning.

Then a pause ensued in the conversation, during which our eyes wandered round the room. They finally rested upon a dusty old glass-case, fixed very high up above the chimney-piece, and containing a trout. It rather fascinated me, that trout; it was such a monstrous fish. In fact, at first glance, I thought it was cod.

'Ah!' said the old gentleman, following the direction of my gaze, 'fine fellow that, ain't he?'

"Quite uncommon" I murmured; and George asked the old man how much he thought it weighed.

"Eighteen pounds six ounces," said our friend, rising and taking down his coat, "Yes", he continued, 'ut w'ur sixteen years ago, come the

third o' next month, that I landed him. I caught him just below the bridge with a minnow. They told me he w'ur in the river, and I said I'd have him, and so I did. You don't see many fish that size about here now. I'm thinking. Goodnight, gentlemen, goodnight.'

And out he went, and left us alone.

We could not take our eyes off the fish after that. It really was a remarkably fine fish. We were still looking at it, when the local carrier, who had just stopped at the inn, came to the door of the room and he also looked at the fish.

"Good-sized trout, that," said George, turning round to him.

"Ah! you may well say that, sir," replied the man: and then he added, "May be you wasn't here, sir, when that fish was caught?"

"No." we told him. We were strangers in the neighbourhood.

"Ah!" said the carrier, "then of course, how should you? It was nearly five years ago that I caught that trout."

"Oh! was if you who caught it, then?" said I.

"Yes, sir," replied the genial old fellow. "I caught him just below the lock-leastways, what was the lock then, one Friday afternoon; and the remarkable thing about it is that I caught him with a fly. I'd gone out pike-fishing, bless you, never thinking of a trout, and when I saw that whopper on the end of my line, blest if it didn't quite take me back. Well, you see, he weighed twenty-six pounds. Goodnight, gentlemen, goodnight."

Five minutes afterwards, a third man came in, and described how he had caught it early one morning, with bleak; and then he left, and a solemn-looking individual came in, and sat down over by the window.

None of us spoke for a while; but, at length. George turned to the new-comer, and said:

"I beg your pardon, I hope you will forgive the liberty that we perfect strangers in the neighbourhood are taking, but my friend here and myself would be so much obliged if you would tell us how you caught that trout up there."



"Why, who told you I caught that trout?" was the surprised query.

We said that nobody had told us so, but somehow or other we felt instinctively that it, was he who had done it.

"Well, it's a most remarkable thing—most remarkable," answered the stolid stranger, laughing; "because, as a matter of fact, you are quite right, I did catch it. But fancy your guessing it like that. Dear me, it's really a most remarkable thing".

And then he went on and told us how it had taken him half an hour to land it, and how it had broken his rod. He said he had weighed it carefully when he reached home, and it had turned the scale at thirty-four pounds.

He went in his turn, and when he was gone, the landlord came in to us. We told him the various histories we had heard about his trout, and he was immensely amused, and we all laughed very heartily.

"Fancy Jim Bates and Joe Muggies and Mr. Jones and old Billy Maunders all telling you that they had caught it. He! ha! well, that is good," said the honest old fellow, laughing heartily. "Yes, they are the sort to give it me, to put up in my parlour, if they had caught it, they are Ha! ha! ha!"

And then he told us the real history of the fish. It seemed that he had caught it himself, years ago, when he was quite a lad; not by any art or skill but by that unaccountable luck that appears to always wait upon a boy when he plays the wag from school, and goes out fishing on a sunny afternoon, with a bit of string tied on to the end of a tree.

He said that bringing home that trout had saved him from a whacking, and that even his school master had said it was worth the rule of three and practice put together.

He was called out of the room at this point, and George and I again turned our gaze upon the fish.

It really was a most astonishing trout. The more we looked at it, the more we marvelled at it.

It excited George so much that he climbed up on the back of a chair to get a better view of it.

And then the chair slipped, and George clutched wildly at the trout-case to save himself, and down it came with a crash. George and the chair on top of it.

"You haven't injured the fish, have you?" I cried in alarm, rushing up.

"I hope not," said George, rising cautiously and looking about.

But he had. The trout lay shattered into a thousand fragments—I say a thousand, but they may have been only nine hundred. I did not count them.

We thought it strange and unaccountable that a stuffed trout should break up into little pieces like that.

And so it would have been strange and un-accountable, if it had been a stuffed trout, but it was not.

That trout was plaster of Paris.

#### Grid summary for The Stuffed Trout

	Weight	When	Where	How	Who
First Story	18 lbs. 60zs.	16 years ago	Under the bridge	With a minnow	Jim Bates
Second Story	26 lbs.	On Friday, five years ago	Lock leastways		Joe Muggins
Third Story		Early one morning		Bleak	Mr. Jones
Fourth Story	34 lbs.			Took half an hour to reel in	Billy Maunders
Fifth Story		Years ago on a sunny afternoon		With a bit of a string	Landlord



## Carlyle's Reaction to Industrialism or Carlyle and the Machine

Rafiq Ahmad Dogar

Carlyle's criticism of his age starts with a profound dissent from its fundamental beliefs, and from the tendencies which, as he thought, sprang from them. He saw there was a pervading belief in the outer, visible, practical and physical world, a belief that the possibility of reform and regeneration rested in statistics, workhouses, model prisons, acts of parliament, philanthropical and co-operative societies, organizations, constitutions, and thirty-nine articles.

Carlyle was never weary of venting his scorn and anger upon those who hoped to regenerate society through utilitarianism. All around him society was in the clutches of machinery and the evil effects of this materialistic philosophy and political economy were particularly evident in the condition of the distressed and discontented workers. Between employers and men, in modern industry, there was no permanence of contract, no permanence therefore of healthy relationship anywhere. Cash-payment for some readers was the sole nexus. The labourer was mechanical cog in a mechanical wheel, in a world of machinery.

### The Ambiguity of the Machine

For Carlyle the symbolism of the machine was immensely powerful. Its fascination was ambivalent: the machine was the agent of progress; at the same time it was in a fairly obvious way, indifferent to human needs and could even be destructive of human life and happiness. It was not the physical reality of machines that was dangerous but their implications in terms of regulating and governing human behaviour. Carlyle believed it was people who thought like machines and who behaved towards their fellows with the rigid indifference of the machine, who were the ultimate enemy. This lay at the root of Carlyle's critique of particular human attitudes, for which the limitations and the inadaptability of the machine provided the appropriate image. On the other hand, he tried to interpret the machine as part of the higher transcendental order because he wanted to show through his transcendental philosophy that



the machine could also be an emblem of transcendental power. He was also trying to show how technological progress could become the means of achieving transcendental ends. The symbolic mode of viewing the machine enabled Carlyle to become 'a seminal critic of his age.'<sup>1</sup>

In his early essay 'Signs of the Times' after talking deprecatingly of the mechanical tendency of the prevailing philosophies, Carlyle comments upon the mechanical nature of the reforming agencies of civilization. The intense egoism of his nature rebels against any kind of Socialism or Collectivism;

Were we required to characterise this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not a Heroical, Devotional, philosophical, or Moral Age, but above all, the Mechanical Age. It is the age of Machinery in every outward and inward sense of the word,....

Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force of any kind.....

We may trace this tendency in all the great manifestations of our time; in its intellectual aspect, the studies it most favours, and its manner of conducting them; in its practical aspects, its politics, arts, religion, morals; in the whole sources, and throughout the whole currents, of its spiritual, no less than its material activity.<sup>2</sup>

With Carlyle the secrets of Nature and of life were discoverable, not so much by the intellect as by the heart. Carlyle finds the unique historical principle in a material object considered symbolically. He calls the age 'the age of Machinery', in every outward and inward sense of the word. He is using the term 'Machinery' in a double sense. Carlyle is making the utmost endeavour to combine the 'outward' meaning of technological progress with its 'inward' meaning of mechanistic thought. He is riveting his attention on the social malaise of his time, and in machinery he is setting up a complex symbol that will enable the Victorian writers to make maximum use of defining their time and its onslaught on society. 'Signs of the Times' provides not only Carlyle's earliest statement on mechanical

thinking, but also lays down the basic thinking of much of the prophet's critique of his age. Carlyle makes it very clear when he writes:

Let us observe how the mechanical genius of our time has diffused itself into quite other provinces. Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but his internal and spiritual also. Here too nothing follows its spontaneous course, nothing is left to be accomplished by old mutual methods.<sup>3</sup>

The great promulgators of this new tendency are the Utilitarians;-

For the wise men who appear as Political Philosophers, and exclusively with the Mechanical province; and occupying themselves in counting up and estimating men's motives, strive by curious checking and balancing, and other adjustment of Profit and Loss, to guide them to their true advantage; While, unfortunately, these same 'motives' are innumerable, and so variable in every individual, that no really useful conclusion can ever be drawn from their enumeration.<sup>4</sup>

Here we come across Carlyle's most influential notions on the evils of mechanistic society: that of the cash-nexus. To Carlyle, 'Mechanism' and 'Mammonism' have become the two pillars of a society in which mere logic has replaced reverence for the unknowable, then the relations between men are altered accordingly. Thus the relation of the 'upper-classes' to their rulers is based on material self interest alone.

The machine in 'Signs of the Times' is a particularly Carlylean symbol. Machinery in the 'outward sense' of the term, means, of course, the new technology of industrialism; 'Machinery' in the 'inward sense' signifies the mechanistic science that created the machines and the rationalized social organization that technology demands. But in the Carlylean symbol the 'inward' and 'outward' senses interpenetrate; the material phenomenon and the spiritual principle cannot be separated; the historical fact and philosophical doctrine are fused together in the single term 'machinery', thus illustrating in the central idea that as much as mechanistic thought has created the machine, the success of the machine has contributed to an increasingly mechanistic cost of thought. Here the rhetorical fusion of the inward and outward sense of machinery can be



seen exemplified in the contemporary world of education. Carlyle claims in 'Signs of the Times':

Everything has its cunningly devised implements; its pre-established apparatus, it is not done by hand, but by machinery.<sup>5</sup>

The contemporary education reforms are not within the controlling metaphor:

Thus we have machines for Education: Lancastrian machines. Hamilton machines; monitors, maps and emblems.<sup>6</sup>

Carlyle further elaborates the intellectual implications of the machine when he continues the image:-

Instruction, that mysterious communing of Wisdom with Ignorance, is no longer an indefinable tentative process, requiring a study of individual aptitudes, and a perpetual variation of means and methods, to attain the same end; but a secure, universal straight forward business, to be conducted in the gross, by proper mechanism, with such intellectual as comes to hand.<sup>7</sup>

True education is defined as cultivating those 'natural qualities' 'requiring a study of individual aptitudes', a perpetual variation that distinguishes organic from inert matter, the child from cotton fibre. The determinism implicit in the use of the machine metaphor does not find favour with Carlyle because education is "mysterious", "indefinable", not reducible to quantitative terms. The immense productivity of the new industry was not only established by a more efficient steam-engine, but the concentration of capital, labour, and machinery into large, efficient units also played a considerable role. In 'Signs of the Times' the metaphor of the machine suggests of so much the power of the new technology as the rationalised organization it necessitates.

Philosophy, science, art, literature, all depend on machinery... In defect of Raphael's and Angelos and Mozarts, we have Royal Academies of Painting, Sculpture, Music; whereby the languishing spirit of Art may be strengthened.<sup>8</sup>

By contrast, Carlyle considers the creation of art as 'natural' process, dependent upon the sudden movement of intuition, the momentary vision of the divine. Accordingly the application of the embodied logic of mechanized industry was not only irrelevant, but destructive, therefore stood condemned.

### **Machines as a symbol of rationalized organization**

As a symbol of rationalized organization of human society, the machine comes to suggest the undesirable social changes occurring outside the factory. By contrast, Carlyle's own belief in organic development permits him to tolerate the most radical of changes, with all its attendant human errors. So it is not changes as such that he opposes but the particular changes he encountered. He particularly fears the loss of Britain's religious system; the alienation of man from his work and from his fullest self; the giddiness of rapid social and technological change, the destruction of community through emerging class conflict, and the unleashing of greed in the anarchic pursuit of money. Carlyle lamenting the loss of roots is conscious of the immediate threat involved in the disintegration and ruin both self and society. Man seeks to encompass in his own experience all the variety of modern existence, but his efforts are marred by the multiplicity of activity in industrial society, the rapidity of change, and his own needless striking out in so many varying directions. All create a sense of restlessness, desperation, and incipient chaos. Sussman argues that 'Carlyle can create a metaphorical statement suggesting the combined effect of mechanistic thought and technological change in bringing about the phenomenon, so troubling to so many Victorians, the decline of individualism.'<sup>9</sup> In a new society, the individual, though the uses his 'natural organs' is in Carlyle's phrase, as powerless as 'a colony of Hindoo Weavers squatting in the heart of Lancashire.'<sup>10</sup>

Carlyle is a social critic whose concern is always the 'inward sense' of mechanization, its effects on the physical life. He sees the individual now entirely on his own confronted by the rationalized organization ceasing to care. Man becomes conscious that he cannot 'accomplish the poorest enterprise single-handed and without mechanical aids; he must make interest with some existing corporation'.<sup>11</sup> The dependence, of submergence, of man on machinery rather than the self becomes an important theme in Carlyle's critique of democracy. Carlyle is an explorer whose ideal is no series of ready-made proposition, no 'Morrison's Pills', paper theorem or magic word, but a giant human



struggle, beginning in each individual and finally reaching out into all society and up into Heaven itself. La Valley says 'The vision of Society in *Past and Present* is religious because it is an exploration of the way of salvation and deliverance, of apocalypse and of ultimate triumph over wordly limitations, and of the way of incorporation within a spiritual and universal body that stands as the eschatological goal toward which each individual struggles'.<sup>12</sup> To Carlyle, the hero by his struggles enters the order of full personal salvation and also inaugurates the possibility of social salvation on earth.

#### The machine and its relation to the turmoils of time

As the essay 'Signs of the Times' moves into the political arena, the machine metaphor is also present there. It goes on to present the combined power of mechanistic thought and mechanization in shaping the imprisonment of society within a narrowly conceived range of political institutions. By contrast he saw the process of history determined by transcendental forces. Carlyle was sensitive to the power of metaphors in shaping institutions. While speaking of the central metaphor of the 'machine of society', he says 'considered merely as a metaphor, all this is well enough, but here, as in so many other cases the 'foam hardens itself into a shell', and the shadow we have wantonly evoked stands terrible before us and will not depart at bidding'.<sup>13</sup> Carlyle however, sees partial truth in the machine analogy. We have the most exclusive faith in Mechanism more visible in the politics of the time. He sees mechanistic political thought as useful in the political aspects of government. Carlyle does not agree with the application of rationalistic patterns to the organic process as of psychic life. In a period when religion was waning or gone, men closed their eyes to the eternal substances of things and opened them only to the shows and shams.

In order to identify the tangible dangers of a coldly logical Benthamism, Carlyle uses what was to become for the Victorians the chief figure for representing destructive rationality, — the mechanized factory. In the eyes of the political economists, society was 'the grand working wheel from which all private machines most derive, or to which they must adapt, their movements'.<sup>14</sup> Carlyle, however, felt that men must 'adapt' their natural action to the smooth order of the state. The government cannot be treated mechanically. The political speculations and exertions of Carlyle's time were finding less and less cognisance.

#### The Dignity of Work

Carlyle's attitude to work, is a revolutionary attitude. To him, the worker is the truest 'emblem of God'; work is the expression of his dignity and the one valid claim to respect. To Carlyle, in society man first feels what he is. The vital integration of many individuals into a new collective reality is for the most important of man's attainments and gives value and meaning to the rest of his activities.

Carlyle sees in the face of society, the reflection on earth of our mutual relation to the infinite, as the one way out of the labyrinth.<sup>15</sup> Carlyle thundered forth his doctrine of brotherhood as an irrefutable moral and economic law. The sense of living, continuity in time, and comradeship in society, combine to provide a major impulse in Carlyle's historical writing. He never forgets that the individual can only realise himself in society because man cannot remain an isolated being. The principal interest that binds men together is either mutual good or mutual misery. According to Carlyle love of man cannot be bought by cash-payment. The working world cannot be left unregimented because leaving it can be anarchic. Anarchy is the outward expression of a wrong motive that saps and poisons from within the common life and each separate soul. He calls forth and condemns that wrong motive again and again; nowhere more clearly than in the opening pages of *Past and Present*, in the chapter headed 'Midas'. There he arraigns the love of money, as the source of social evil. Falsely identified with pleasure, and even with happiness, it is the outward expression of inward indifference to God. It penetrates and rots both action and thought. So long as men are subject to it, there is no health in them.

Work is not advocated as an instrument of successful individual achievement, directed to the piling up of money. The worker's reward is not the power to make more than his fellow workers but the sense that, in working, he is realising both his manhood, his brotherhood and his sonship of God. When he appeals to the captains of industry to 'see to it that his gallant work-hosts' are joined to him 'in veritable brotherhood', by 'quite other and deeper ties than those of temporary day's wages', he commands this, not as a means to 'efficiency in production', but as a means to realising the social and religious implication of work, on whose basis alone a true society can be built. Accordingly, Carlyle calls for a 'noble chivalry of work', and for laws and fixed rules which arise out of that, for nobler than any chivalry of Fighting,<sup>16</sup> was an enemy united in brotherhood, free from the isolation which is 'sum total of wretchedness'.



Awake, ye noble workers, warriors in the one true war: all this must be remedied. It is you who are already half-alive, whom I will welcome into life, whom I will conjure, in God's name, to shake off your enchanted sleep, and live wholly. Cease to count scalps, gold purses; not in these lies your or our salvation. Even these, if you count only these, will not long be left. Let bucaniering be put far from you; alter speedily, abrogate all laws of the bucaniers, if you would gain any victory that shall endure. Let God's justice, let pity, nobleness and manly valour, with more gold purses or with fewer, testify themselves, in this your brief Life - transit to all the Eternities, the Gods and silences. It is to you I call; for ye are not dead, ye are already half-alive; there is in you a sleepless dauntless energy the prime matter of all nobleness in man. Honour to you in your kind. It is to you I call: ye know at least this, that the Mandate of God to His creature man is: Work! The future Epic of the World rests not with those that are near dead but with those that are alive, and those that are coming into life.<sup>17</sup>

True, this appeal is specifically addressed to the 'Captains of Industry', a phrase of his coinage; but wording and context alike show that it refers to all who have a true view of work, who did it and respect it. It unites in one army the brain worker and hand worker and sees them set against Mammon worship, against 'Hudson' and the 'Hesper's Fiddle', his respect for the candid brain worker needs no emphasis. Free and honest thought is for him, the root of every virtue. But Carlyle was aware of the difficulty of leading men out of the blind maze because he had no 'Morrison's pills'. He had no easy prescription to hand out.

How it is to be cured? Brothers, I am sorry I have got no Morrison's Pill for curing the maladies of Society. It were infinitely handier if we had a Morrison's Pill, Act of Parliament, or remedial measure, which men could swallow, one good time, and then go on in their old courses, cleared from all miseries and mischiefs! Unluckily we have none such; unluckily the Heavens themselves in their rich pharmacopoeia, contain none such. There will no 'thing' be done that will cure you. There will a remedial universal alteration of your regimen and way of life take place; there

will a most agonising divorce between you and your chimeras, luxuries and falsities, take place; a most toilsome all-but 'impossible' return to Nature, and her veracities and her integrities, take place; not so the inner fountains of life may again begin, like eternal Light-fountains, to irradiate and purify your bloated, swollen foul existence, drawing nigh, as at present, to nameless death! Either death, or else all this will take place. Judge if, with such diagnosis, any Morrison's Pill is like to be discoverable.<sup>18</sup>

Carlyle not only showed his generation where and how they were wrong, but where and how they could be right. He applied his faith in the facts, and in the light of it worked out a social philosophy.

In work man finds both his own fulfilment and that of nature. Fundamentally work is energy, the full power through which the self is restored into nature's vitality. La-Valley has commented 'Salvation becomes possible in this new religion by a descent into the self effected through work (and quite often merely a work regarded as painful Calvinistic duty and suffering rather than self-fulfilment) only by sacrificing one self to the process of the Universe does one gain all'.<sup>19</sup> Again in *Past and Present* 'Thou must descend to the Mothers, to the Manes, and Hercules - like long suffer and labour there wouldst thou emerge with victory into the sunlight'.<sup>20</sup> In Carlyle's new religion man becomes his own maker, perfecting himself through work and thereby redeeming society. Criticising the Benthamites, Carlyle insists that they could never 'hope to comprehend the infinitude of man's soul under formulas of Profit and Loss; and rule over this too, as over a patent engine, but checks and valves and balances'.<sup>21</sup> In 1829 Carlyle can refute psychological mechanism by an appeal to German transcendentalism and enter into the debate between a mechanistic and vitalistic psychology. Carlyle's attempt to justify his admiration for technology continues by seeing the machine as a spirit, so he can see philosophical mechanism, the categories of space and time, and causality, as creations of the higher reason: "for man is not the creature and product of Mechanism; but in a far truer sense, its creator and producer".<sup>22</sup>

Carlyle disturbed the intellectual dependence upon scientific explanation. he asserts that "the Metaphysical and Moral Sciences are falling into decay, while the physical are engrossing, every day, more respect and attention".<sup>23</sup> The metaphysical questions were just those that lay beyond



mechanistic cerebral investigation. These questions could only be answered by applying law of cause and effect. Carlyle has outlined these questions with the usual metaphors of organic life and religious mystery because "the grand secrets of Necessity and Free will, of the Mind's vital or non-vital dependence on Matter, of our mysterious relations to Time and Space, to God, to the Universe".<sup>24</sup> Yet Carlyle does not stop using the machine symbol to synchronize it with the turmoil of the times; increasing organization, rationalized politics, philosophical determinism. Sussman has remarked that the essay 'Signs of the Times', is hardly a tract for machine breakers.<sup>25</sup> Carlyle does not praise the machine unnecessarily. But when he praises the machine, it is no longer the inner matter. The machine takes on the qualities of life and becomes spiritualized, 'the shuttle drops from the fingers of the weaver, and falls into iron fingers that play it faster. The sailor furls his sail and lays down his oar; and bids a strong, unwearied servant, on vaporous wings, bear him through the waters.'<sup>26</sup> The problem before Carlyle is how to celebrate technological achievement whilst remaining true to transcendentalism how to welcome the machine without accepting the methodology of science and the politics of Bentham. Sussman argues in 'Signs of the Times' rather than renouncing machine technology entirely, Carlyle appeals for balance between what he calls 'Machanism' and the 'Dynamical', between technological skill and ultimate transcendental sense.<sup>27</sup> Though undue cultivation of the outward and mechanical is obviously a cause of it, yet:

undue cultivation of the inward or Dynamical province leads to idle, visionary impracticable courses, and specially intrudes, to Superstition and Fanaticism, with their long grain of baleful and well known evil. Undue cultivation of the outward again though less immediately prejudicial, and even for the time productive of many palpable benefits, must, in the long run, by destroying Moral Force, which is the parent of all other Force, prove not less certainly, and perhaps still more hopelessly, pernicious. This, we take it, is the grand characteristic of our age.<sup>28</sup>

Carlyle is perfectly aware that 'By our skill in Mechanism, it has come to pass that in the management of external things we excel in other ages',<sup>29</sup> and this contains the possibility of vision and excitement. La-Valley says 'Carlyle may hate machines if they threaten to invade the inner life, but the contemplation of a steam engine can produce a highly charged sense of power within as well as outside the self'.<sup>30</sup>

Subsequently, as the essay advances, Carlyle practically abandons any attempt to define the limits of each of his terms. They are so hopelessly intertwined, for they work into one another, and by means of one another, so intricately and inseparably. Carlyle exclaims that the age is also advancing. Its unrest, its ceaseless activity, its discontent also contain matters of promise. Mechanism is no longer a foe but now an active principle of force itself, propelling life onward. La-Valley remarks, 'Carlyle reaches the same conclusion as Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*', and like Blake, he does not explore the exact relationship or limits of his dialectical forces'.<sup>31</sup> Raymond Williams argues that, 'Carlyle wants to see a restoration of balance, in terms, he has set. He is writing, not a rejection of his time, but a criticism of it.'<sup>32</sup> Further Williams comments:

Carlyle is in this essay stating a direct response to the England of his times; to Industrialism, which he was the first to name; to the feel, the quality, of men's general reactions—the structure of contemporary feeling which is only ever apprehended directly; as well as to the character and conflict of formal systems and points of view. 'Signs of the Times', as a phrase, carries the right emphasis.<sup>33</sup>

#### **New chivalry of Labour and labour organization**

Out of a state composed of leaders and workers must come the new chivalry of labour. Carlyle called it a 'chivalry of labour' because he found in the old medieval social order a spirit which he wished to see revived in the new. The feudal past can teach the industrial present. The true worker for Carlyle must ever be a fighter like one of the warriors of William the Conqueror. Man is created to fight. He is perhaps the best of all definable as a born soldier; his life is a battle and a march under the right general. The establishment of soldiery had come down to the society of today as the obvious symbol of the power of organization and the equally obvious proof of the changes that could be wrought in human nature.

Yet it should not be understood that the drill sergeant as a professional man-killer was Carlyle's hero, despite the sneers of critics, old and new. He abhorred war. He declared in *Past and Present*:

Under the sky is no uglier spectacle than two men with clenched teeth, and hell-fire eyes, hacking one another's flesh; converting precious living bodies, and priceless living souls,



into nameless mass of putrescence, useful only for turnipmanure. How did a chivalry ever come out of that; how anything that was not hideous, scandalous, infernal?<sup>34</sup>

Carlyle wanted to see the spirit of the fighting soldier, his courage, obedience and loyalty, not his involvement in violence, recreated in the worker of the new era, engaged in warfare of modern industry. In *Past and Present* he tells us:

It is for ever indispensable for a man to fight. Now with Necessity, with Barrenness, Scarcity, with Puddles, Bogs, tangled Forests, unkempt Cotton; - now also with the hallucinations of his poor fellow men.<sup>35</sup>

In the modern age, Carlyle was not trying to revive the spirit of the feudal fighter alone but it was the respect for super authority, for old loyalties and pieties, and for the graces and courtesies, the easy dignity, and 'kingly simplicities'. The problem was how to awaken and preserve the old values in human nature in conjunction with inevitable democracy. The task was difficult and tortuous and Carlyle was aware of this. For the old order must yield to the new. For we are to think that 'the epic verily is not Arms and The Man, but Tools and the Man, — an infinitely wider kind of epic.<sup>36</sup> An age of fighting must give place to an age of working, — with 'Captains of Industry' for leaders, instead of 'captains of chivalry'.

The blind Plugson of Underhot, modern capitalist cotton manufacturer, who, like the medieval king, had hitherto been a leader, but also, like the medieval pirate, a plunderer, must be transformed into a fighting Chevalier, with the nobleness of the feudal baron and the bravery of the old time buccanner. If the captains of industry are so transformed they were to become in the future, 'the true fighters, henceforth recognisable as the only true ones. Fighters against Chaos, Necessity and the Devils and Jotuns; and lead on Mankind in that great, and alone true, and universal warfare... Let the captains of industry retire into their own hearts, and ask solemnly, if there is nothing but virtuous hunger for fine wines, valet reputation and gilt carriages, discoverable there?'<sup>37</sup> The old slavery must give place to a new freedom but not to any kind of new feudalism of even a voluntary kind. No man is to be thrall to another. 'Gurth could only tend pigs; this one will build cities, conquer wastes worlds'.<sup>38</sup> He will freely subject himself to guidance, even to the authority, of his master, to whom

he will be attached by bonds quite different from the bonds of slavery. He will be bound by the strong force of good-will and justice, the only powers that can keep men long together. F.W. Roe says 'Social Progress in other words, could not be effected, Carlyle held, unless men, leaders and workers alike, could be gradually transformed into a fuller and richer humanity'.<sup>39</sup>

The nurturing of the modern industrial worker into the new chivalry of Labour was the supreme task of the future. In this task the State must be *avant-garde*. The state must break up the regime of *Laissez-faire* and must interfere between masters and men. It must organize industry and compel obedience to the principle of equal justice and equal opportunity for all. In order to accomplish its ends, the state must guide and control human activity in ways yet scarcely dreamed of. The task was necessarily arduous and time consuming, for the realization of the ideals throughout the complex structure of modern society was an enterprise of stupendous dimensions. But Carlyle urged that the task should be started, and started upon right lines. He vigorously assailed and ridiculed a government that debated endlessly on minor issues and left the minor ones to their fate. In 'Chartism' Carlyle reflects:

The old grand question, Whether A is to be in office or B, with the innumerable subsidiary questions growing out of that: Canada question, Irish Appropriation question; West India question, Queen's Bedchamber question; Game Laws, Usury Laws, African Blacks, Hill Coolies, Smithfield Cattle, and Dogs-carts, — all manner of questions and subjects, except simply this the alpha and omega of all. Surely Honourable Members ought to speak of the condition of England question too.<sup>40</sup>

Carlyle suggested that it was folly to propose solutions to specific problems; rather he declared that there should be an organization of labour under the new chivalry of workers and masters, and that the work or organisation should be mainly by the state.

In *Past and Present* Carlyle tells us:

The main substance of this Immense Problem of Organizing Labour and first of all Managing the Working Classes, will, it is very clear, have to be solved by those who stand



practically in the middle of it; by those who themselves work and preside over work. Of all that can be enacted by any Parliament in regard to it, the germs must already lie potentially extant in those two classes, who are to obey such enactment.<sup>41</sup>

The situation demanded that there must grow up proper human relations between the captains of industry and their men. The captain, being a just master, can win from the workers steadfast loyalty by reason of his fair and humane leadership. 'Love of men cannot be bought by cash-payment; and without love men cannot endure to be together'.<sup>42</sup> With love there must go justice. No worker in the new chivalry of labour must be dependent upon the charity of his superiors. As Carlyle tells us in 'Chartism',

Not to be supported by roundsmen systems, by never so liberal Parish doles, or lodged in free and easy work houses when distress overtakes him; not for this, however in words he may clamour for it; not for this, but for something far different does the heart of him struggle. It is 'for justice' that he struggles; for just wages', — not in money alone. An ever-toiling inferior, he would fain (though as yet he knows it not) find for himself a superior that should lovingly and wisely govern; is not that too the 'just wages' of his service done? It is for a manlike place and relation, in this world where he sees himself a man, that he struggles.<sup>43</sup>

#### **The individual and the State**

Carlyle believed that if in the new order, masters and men are united by relations of love and justice, other relations and conditions will immediately spring from these. In all industrial and commercial operation, a fair cash payment for a fair day's work, must be the basic principle. While it will be the business of the State to ensure it. Carlyle also advocated that compulsory Universal Education is also the responsibility of the State. There was need of the diffusion of intelligence, if society was to be quickened into new life. He emphasized that knowledge was the 'prime necessity of man. The workers must themselves be educated to the extent of their capacity, so that their knowledge and energy might contribute collectively to the solution of great social problems. A fair day's wage for a fair day's work and universal compulsory education were thus to be foundations in the new chivalry of labour. Yet Carlyle

continued his incessant struggle for reforms. He also advocated that control in industry should be democratic and it should imbibe the spirit of fellowship and a vision of the new society of the future and its responsibilities supplemented if need be by government.

Sussman claims that 'reinforcing Carlyle's spiritualizing of the machine is his assurance that technological progress is the unfolding of a transcendental historical necessity in the material world'.<sup>44</sup> Carlyle makes a familiar equation of Progress with Providence and he describes the causes of the industrial revolution, by which he means the inspired revelation of the inventors. There is here, a mixture of Carlyle's trust in Providence and a strong stiffening of simple Patriotism. In respect of the transcendental order, England becomes a hero among nations and its technological skill a sure sign of its election to a divine mission. Its mechanization is seen as the culmination of its spiritual development. As Carlyle indicates in 'Chartism'

Who shall say what work and works this England has yet to do? For what purpose this land of Britain was created, set like a jewel in the encircling blue of Ocean, and this Tribe of Saxons, fashioned in the depths of Time,.... No man can say: it was for a work, and for work, incapable of announcement in words. Thou seest them there; part of them stand alone, and visible to the eye; even these thou canst name: how much less the other still matter of prophecy only.<sup>45</sup>

Sussman says that 'Carlyle's attempt to reconcile mechanization and transcendentalism is more a rhetorical than an intellectual success'.<sup>46</sup> While emphasising the role of intuition in the development of technology, Carlyle states explicitly the denigration of intellect. He says that this denigration of the intellect will distort the aesthetic response to the machine throughout the era. The use of the machine as a transcendental symbol speaks not only about the inevitability but also the moral rightness of mechanization. Sussman comments that 'The prophecy of England as a hero among nations is but a transcendental figure for Victorian Chauvinism'.<sup>47</sup> Carlyle's vision of the transcendental machine, of mechanical progress spiritualized, shapes his incisive social criticism.

Carlyle's complex perception of technological unemployment is consistently expressed through an equally complex use of the machine metaphor. He tells us in 'Chartism':



...it is consistent that the wages of 'skilled labour', as it is called, should in many cases be higher than they ever were: the giant Steamengine in a giant English nation will here create violent demand for labour, and will there annihilate demand. But, alas, the great portion of labour is not skilled: the millions are and must be skillless, where strength alone is wanted; ploughers delvers, borers; hewers of wood and drawers of water; menials of steamengine, only the chief menials and immediately body-servants of which require skill.<sup>48</sup>

There is an apparent fear that machine has decreased the need for workers whose only qualification is their strength. Yet it has increased the need for skilled labourers. Sussman has remarked:

With specific economic suggestions, the figure of the machine as a powerful ruler waited upon by human servants, a figure that appears frequently throughout the century, suggests the psychological effect of subordinating not only economic activity but also natural impulse to the demand of the machine.<sup>49</sup>

#### The effects of mechanization

Yet Carlyle now saw social dislocation as a purely economic problem. His ability to see the inward as well as the outward sense of 'Machinery', to comprehend the emotional effects of technological change, is one of the great strengths of his social criticism. To him, work was both a psychological necessity and a moral duty. When he describes the effects of mechanization on the worker, and the worker's helplessness within the system, he emphasizes the psychological rather than the economic result. 'English Commerce' he claims, with its world-wide convulsive fluctuations, with its immeasurable Proteus Steam-demon, makes all paths uncertain for them, all life a bewilderment, sobriety, steadfastness, peaceable continuance, the first blessings of man, are not theirs.<sup>50</sup> Carlyle continues his comment on the general dislocations created by the machine. We can say that Carlyle's entire critique of industrial society is set in a psychological frame. Gurth to Carlyle seems happy, in comparison with many a 'Lancashire and Buckinghamshire man of these days'; he is happy with the 'certainty of supper and social lodging', and also happy with 'the inexpressible satisfaction of feeling himself related indissolubly, though in a rude brass-collar way, to his fellow mortals in this Earth',<sup>51</sup> happier in a 'stable authoritarian society where

he is insulated from the insecurity and isolation faced by the industrial worker forced to compete for jobs in a rapidly changing society'.<sup>52</sup>

For Carlyle the psychic remedy for the psychological malaise lay in work, any kind of work, even machine work. Carlyle's attack on the quality of Machine-made goods is moral rather than aesthetic. In 'Shooting Niagara', we listen to the voice of the outraged moralist. Carlyle tells us:

You are not to purchase, to make, or even to vend any ware or product of the 'cheap and nasty' genus, and cannot in any case do it without sin, and even treason against the Maker of You, — consider what a quantity of sin, of treason, petty and high must be accumulating in poor England every day!<sup>53</sup>

Presumably Carlyle is pointing out here 'the commercial spirit that violates the ethic of work in the hope of quick profit',<sup>54</sup> To Carlyle, the entire process of mechanization has no concern with ethical ends. The purpose of his social criticism is to prove that with the proper clothing the inevitable mechanization of England may body forth its true nature as part of a new moral endeavour. He wanted to bring order to the uncontrolled development of the machine. His theory of clothes, is a theory of symbols. Man is the clothes-making and clothes wearing animal. Naked man is not man. The visible symbols of clothes are symbols, of the phenomenal self or social role. The social role is but the symbol of the eternal infinite ego. To complete this scheme, the physical world is but the symbol of the divine.

#### The process of mechanization and its ethical concern

In 'Chartism' and *Past and Present*, we see the necessity of bringing order to the uncontrolled development of machines as means of developing the ethical values inherent in mechanization. Carlyle forthrightly casts his vote for the new spiritual epoch over the old. But the moment of transfer is unequivocal. Industrial society becomes an immense monastic order, complete with discipline and self-sacrifice, capable of including the entire population. The main responsibility for revealing the ethical ends implicit in the technological means now lay with the 'Captains of Industry'. It becomes imperative for the industrialists (as a hero) to be the transmitter of the divine to the material world, the prophet of the transcendental purpose emerging through mechanization. Carlyle's metaphor for society is not the machine, but organic life. In *Past and Present*, Carlyle sees 'immense Industrial Ages, as yet all in organic,



and in a quite pulpy condition, requiring desperately to harden themselves into some organism!<sup>55</sup> He wanted to inculcate an emotional bond of loyalty between master and men, yet he could praise the machine only as an instrument of a dimly perceived ethical purpose. He tells us that the concern with the unconscious presupposes to some extent the concern with alienation, for unconscious reality is essentially that from which men are principally alienated. Accordingly, he depicts the effects of alienation upon society and charts its origin, he simultaneously explores his own alienation from both the past and the present. Throughout, his writing is present his own peculiar sense of isolation:

Isolation is the sum-total of wretchedness to man. To be cut off, to be left solitary: to have a world alien, not your world; all a hostile camp for you; not a home at all, of hearts and faces who are youngs, whose you are! It is the frightfullest enchantment.<sup>56</sup>

Sussman argues that Carlyle sought in 'mechanized work a binding spiritual purpose for the nineteenth century similar to the integrating religious faith of the twelve'.<sup>57</sup> Yet his conquest of alienation is not a constantly progressing drama, however, but a history of rises and falls. In *Sartor Resartus* he seems to handle the problem of alienation in a way that is both literarily and psychologically rich and successful. In order to set men to the duty of work Carlyle looked to an authoritarian state. The early Victorian writers on the machine speak as prophets rather than aestheticians. For Carlyle the machine is a sign of the times, like the hero a tangible manifestation of the providential forces shaping England. It is not too much to say that the central aim of Carlyle's life-work, into the accomplishment of which he threw the weight of all his great powers, was to save man, irrespective of class, of nation, from the crushing effects of industrialism by restoring to him faith in his humanity. Carlyle wanted to create through man and his fellows a new society (his Utopia) resting upon sound human relations. He believed that the 'High-instincts' in human nature must be kept alive if man is to survive the extraordinary risks of an industrial age. Carlyle recognized the value of machinery as did Arnold, but he saw just as clearly its danger to the moral interests of man.

# Footnotes

1. Herbert L. Sussman, *Victorians and the Machine*, 1968, p. 15.
2. 'Signs of the Times' in *Sartor Resartus and Selected Prose*, ed. H.L. Sussman, 1970, pp. 6—10.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
9. Sussman, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.
10. 'Signs of the Times' in *Sartor Resartus and Selected prose*, ed. Sussman, 1970, p. 9.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
12. A. J. La Valley, *Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern*, 1968, p. 194.
13. 'Signs of the Times' in *Sartor Resartus and Selected prose*, ed. Sussman, 1970, p. 14.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
15. See 'characteristics' in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. III, Thomas Carlyle, pp. 10—12.
16. See W.E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, 1957, pp. 243-44, 248—55.  
See also *Past and Present*, Book, IV, ch. IV, Book, III, chapters, VIII—XI.
17. *Past and Present* Everyman's Library edition, 1960, p. 264.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
19. A. J. La Valley, *op. cit.*, p. 207.
20. *Past and Present*, p. 198.
21. 'Signs of the Times', in *Sartor Resartus and Selected Prose*, 1970, p. 14.



22. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
25. Sussman, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
26. 'Signs of the Times' in *Sartor Resartus and Selected Prose*, 1970, p. 7.
27. Sussman, *Op. cit.*, p. 24.
28. 'Signs of the Times' in *Sartor Resartus and Selected Prose* 1970, p. 21.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
30. La Valley, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 61
32. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, 1961, p. 89.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-6.
34. *Past and Present*; p. 183.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
39. F.W. Roe, *Social Philosophy of Carlyle and Ruskin*, 1929 and 1969, pp. 106-7.
40. 'Chartism' in *Critical Essays*, vol. IV. Thomas Carlyle, p. 121. See also pp. 126-7 'what constitutes... likely to be ascertained'.
41. *Past and Present*, p. 260.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
43. 'Chartism' in *Critical Essays*, vol. IV, Thomas Carlyle, p. 134.
44. Sussman, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
45. 'Chartism', in *Critical Essays*, vol. IV, Thomas Carlyle, p. 171.
46. Sussman, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

48. 'Chartism' in *Critical Essays*, vol. IV, Thomas Carlyle, p. 141.
49. Sussman, *Iop. cit.*, p. 35.
50. 'Chartism' in *Critical Essays*, vol. IV, Thomas Carlyle, p. 143.
51. *Past and Present*, p. 204.
52. Sussman, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
53. 'Shooting Niagara' in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, Vol. V. Thomas Carlyle, p. 32.
54. Sussman, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
55. *Past and Present*, p. 239.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 264.
57. Susman, *op. cit.*, p. 40.



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## Linguistic Preparation for Reading Literary Texts

Surriya Shaffi Mir

The article discusses the use of literary texts for college reading and their contribution to language. It argues for a re-orientation in the teaching of literature and suggestions are made to improve its teaching.

We have a tradition of teaching English for well over a century, but over the years complaints have been rising of falling standards in English and dissatisfaction with the performance of graduates. Although language teaching has advanced greatly from what it was in the days when English was first introduced in this part of the world, we still conduct the teaching of English along customary lines. Literary texts (selections of short stories, one-act plays, prose writings, poetry and novel) have always been and are still prescribed for intensive study at intermediate and degree levels.

Language teaching cannot be content free and the selection of appropriate content is crucially important in facilitating language learning. Some language educators are for putting the foreign language programme of literature while others believe that language can and should be taught through literature. The debate on separation between language and literature study is not new. As in other aspects of life the pendulum keeps swinging from one end to the other.

Language is not opposed to literature in the way science is, and it is not a question of either literature or factual texts but whether or not the study of literature can in any way contribute to language learning. Literature is ideal for *developing* an awareness of language use for it presents language in discourse in which the parameters of the setting and role relationships are defined and it illustrates registers and dialogues which are embedded within a social frame. Context is readily available in which exploration and discussion of content can lead to examination of the language and learners' attention drawn to why a particular form is used. As long as we can distinguish the typical native language or culture



form the characteristic stylistic features of the writers being used, literature has great potential learning benefits for teaching language.

One can understand the desire to retain English literature at the degree level. In developing countries opportunities to experiment with new ideas are limited and not so readily available. They are easily available at second hand through reading English literature. As Thumboo says, '*It carries almost endless permutations of human experience and offers commentaries on them.*' (1985, 53)

Povey (1967) believes that the linguistic difficulty of literary texts has been overstated; readers do not need to have total comprehension to gain something from a text. Summarizing the aims of using English literature in the non-native context, he argues that it will increase all language skills because it will '*extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax.*' (1967, 42)

Littlewood (1976) stresses the qualitative contribution of literary texts to language learning. '*The study of literature allows a variety of emphases and perspectives. Only if we become clear about what literature has to offer, and what specific pupils require, can we begin to discuss its role and select appropriate methods and texts. Above all, any prospective text must be scrutinized according to requirements.*' (1986, 183)

According to Widdowson (1975) the aim of teaching literature should be to develop the students capacity for individual response to language use and to guide him to a realisation of the way in which English poetry is used to express messages that are unique beyond the expressive scope of the conventional code. (p.76 - 77). He suggests that literature should be studied as *discourse* and points out that it can develop '*a sharper awareness of the communicative resources of the language being learned.*' (1975, 83). He considers it is useful in developing linguistic knowledge both on usage and use levels (1978, 3), and an ideal vehicle for illustrating language use. As a subject it has as its principal aim '*the development of the capacity for individual response to language use.*' (1975, 76)

Brumfit (1985) argues that the extent to which students enjoy reading literature, it may increase their motivation to interact with a text.

and in this way ultimately increase their reading proficiency. He is for the use of literary text at fairly advanced levels and relates it to the reading skills of the learners. For Moody (1971) *the study of literature is fundamentally a study of language in operation.* McKay (1982) qualifies success in using literature upon selection of texts which are not too difficult on linguistic or conceptual level.

Bolinger (1968) and Esler (1968) are for gradual introduction to literature after good linguistic preparation of the learners. The present article supports this view point.

If literary texts are to form part of a compulsory language course then the specific aims of teaching the literary course must be made clear. What is the specific aim of using authentic literary texts? Is it the study of language, the development of intellectual and critical thinking, the development of reading skills which can be applied to other forms and types of texts, the development of skills for linguistic analysis, stylistics and appreciation, the development of sensitivity and response to usage, or to impart knowledge of the contents of the literary work? As the objectives for the prescribed readings are not stated, it is assumed that total mastery of content is required. Goals for the study of literature need to be clearly specified and will depend on the level of the learner. Lack of common goals for school and college teachers of English make the transition from high school to college difficult for students.

In our situation the primary goal of using literature should be the development of competence in language and not literature. There is great disparity between the contents offered for study of English at school and college. As only literary texts are prescribed for reading at college level the need is to familiarize and prepare learners at the lower stages to handle literature. At high school level students may read literary works for literal levels of comprehension, main ideas and language practice. The goals for college learners might include practice in advanced reading comprehension, developing higher critical levels of comprehension, such as distinguishing facts from opinions, making inferences, identifying purpose and tone etc., reading and discussing creative work. Those who opt for advanced study (elective) recognition of figures of speech, introduction to literary terms and concepts, understanding levels of meaning and other stylistic features may be the focus.

Teaching literature to non-English speaking students is a complex enterprise. As in any learning situation numerous variables exist but two impinge the most.



- (i) Students' proficiency in reading and writing, and
- (ii) the teacher's command of the language and knowledge of literature.

A basic reason for students' poor performance is their lack of proficiency in reading. Students entering college do not have the reading skills considered essential for basic reading. Students perceive an unfair gap between the prescribed college (literary) readings and those offered at school as their competence as readers has never been developed. Their earlier reading does not prepare them to read between the lines into a literary and cultural framework that lies beyond dictionary meaning.

Studies have been conducted which explain processes involved in the reading of a written text, especially in a foreign language. Unless learners have been taught to read the target language fluently, without laboriously poring over every word, it is futile to expose them to literary texts as they can neither appreciate the language nor the mood, tone, or special intent of the author. Sensitivity and response to language usage cannot be developed through mere exposure to poetry or through explanations by teachers if the learners can hardly read and understand straight forward text. As the learner does not possess an intuitive sense of what is linguistically appropriate in the target language nor is aware of the conventions of use and usage the need for guidance is imperative. Reading like any other activity requires guidance.

Contemporary research emphasizes providing guidance for learners in developing skill in reading, rather than expecting it to develop somehow on its own accord. The learner needs to be exposed and acquainted with a variety of types of discourse for which English is used so that he/she becomes aware of the differences between common and rare varieties of English and of alternate possibilities of expression.

According to Haynes (1976) a learner requires basic skills in order to make sense of any piece of literary discourse. The student

- (a) must be able to construct, analyse and interpret normal conventional syntactic structures and associational inter-relations.
- (b) possess a sufficient command of lexis - coupled with this a

- realisation that a given word can be used in a number of ways which needs to be developed at an earlier level, and
- (c) be able to follow non-linear patterns of interconnections which bring about artistic coherence.

Most literary texts require high level reading skills and strategies, beyond word recognition and recall, such as interpreting, analyzing, inferring, etc. As none of the above skills are developed at any stage, students are far from proficient in the language to appreciate literary language. Using literary texts for language teaching without providing learners the linguistic base to build their appreciation on makes the practice of using literary texts more than questionable. Reading of literature relies on a basic competence in general reading.

A learner must have the capacity to read so that he/she can get 'inside' the story. Students need to be prepared properly to engage in it as a genuine critical inquiry leading to personal appreciation and not just "trafficking in fine phrases and packaged judgements".

The ability to read English with confidence and fluency needs to be built up on other kinds of reading matter. As authentic literary texts are prescribed for intensive study at college, gradual and systematic development of the learners' reading skills is necessary at the secondary level. This can be accomplished by introducing learners to literary works (simplified) at earlier stages, non-fiction for intensive, and simplified literary texts for extensive reading.

As English literature is also offered as an elective subject for students who want to make a specialized study of literature it is not obligatory to have the entire reading component for compulsory English to consist of only literary texts. Learners need exposure of a wide variety of authentic material of which literary texts could be *one* component. The reading component should be composed of material drawn from scientific, sociological, political, linguistic and literary fields. Learners need practice and exposure to the kind of language they are most likely to encounter in future life in journals, periodicals, newspapers, etc.

Studying literature in conjunction with other discourse types can assist learners in identifying and understanding the operations of language for different communicative functions and at the same time can sensitize them to schemata of literary discourse. (Widdowson, 1983). Students



need to be well prepared linguistically before they are exposed to literary texts. Language educators agree that a literary appreciation can never be complete without a knowledge of the structure and semantics of the language. There is a level of linguistic competence below which it is pointless trying to respond to works of literature. The teaching of literature cannot simply involve an extension of ordinary reading skills.

Certainly in so far as literature can promote an overall increase in reading proficiency it will contribute to this goal but to have the entire language course consisting of *ONLY* literary texts is completely out of line with modern practice of the last forty years. With an impoverished command of the language and little familiarity with reading authentic, (connected) texts, students resort to rote learning of summaries of texts available in help books to overcome the hurdle of examination. They may succeed but remain incompetent in the language.

At times teaching literature is a situation taken from the absurd in which the students are supposed to read books in a language they hardly understand, and then discuss structure, the author's style, etc. Students invariably produce summaries when a critical appreciation or a statement of the theme is required. As students only strive to pass the examination importance is placed on memorizing literary terms, character sketches, etc. Their answers rarely show understanding of the literary work but only the capacity to memorize. A great majority do not even read the texts, at least not as engaged, critical, competent readers.

According to Widdowson (1985) in non-English speaking countries when students of literature are asked to make critical comments/observations about literary works - on the supposition that they have already 'learnt' to read them, they make use of "the numerous booklets of potted critical judgements" available in the bookshops. These booklets enable students to make critical comments as if they had read the original. So in a sense they learn to 'perform' without competence.

The decline or success of English literature studies is directly related to the strength of the language base. Students cannot have an intellectual and aesthetic appreciation of a foreign literature without a knowledge of the language. Levels of response to literature correlate very accurately with levels of competence in the language. With a weak language base students are at a disadvantage no matter how good a teacher or syllabus is provided. Hence the failure of students at the

college level to appreciate and respond to the English courses which are entirely literature.

The teaching and learning of literature must do more than simply exercise learning of content. In the current practice - explanation of content in the mother tongue and writing in answers memorized from crib notes - the deeper insights that literature has to offer are usually ignored. Literature can advance the learning of language provided the teacher knows how to exploit the text. At present neither language nor literature is taught well. Literary texts are taught as finished products to be described and learnt by heart. They are never exploited for language use or usage or to enrich the reader's vocabulary.

The need is to help teachers to teach literature more effectively. There is need for change in the way we teach literature and composition. What is required on the part of teachers is question asking techniques, the ability to raise and inspire questions about the text under study, and to discuss the questions raised. There is no need for definitive answers. Literature teaching must seek to establish a personal interaction between reader and text, to develop a response and the ability to generalize from the given text either to other aspects of literature or to personal or social significance outside literature.

Though literature plays such a dominant role in the teaching of English very little effort is made to train teachers in the teaching of literature. It is ironic that lecturers in English who will spend their lives teaching literature are never introduced to methods and techniques for doing so. Perusal of teacher training programs (CT, B.ED, M.ED) reveals very little concern with presenting works of literature to school and college students. An extensive course in teaching literature and language to prospective teachers after their selection by the Public Service Commissions advocated.

It is often argued that literary texts were studied in pre-Independence times and posed no problems. If it served the purpose then why not now. It is conveniently forgotten that from high school onward the study of English incorporated a thorough grounding in grammar with focus on idiom, syntax (structure of the English sentence, analysis of sentences, parsing, the transformation and synthesis of sentences) along with the study of literature. Analysis and synthesis helps learners to access the language system, makes them aware of their relationship to meaning and



enables them to handle linguistic vagaries encountered in literary texts. Currently English syllabuses of all levels are wholly inadequate with respect to grammar.

Literature cannot be considered comprehensively unless the language it uses is examined any more than the advanced study of that language can be undertaken away from its literature. Linguistic concepts add to the understanding of literature by throwing light on how language works. A lack of linguistic knowledge impedes access to literary meaning. The question then is how much language proficiency is needed as a precondition for literary interpretation?

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## The Enigma of Identity and Racial Memory in Paul Scott and Hanif Kureishi

Merle Jivanandham

"When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly be it illusory or real, we are threatened with destruction by our own discovery. Suddenly it becomes possible there are others, that we ourselves are an "other" among others. All meaning and every goal having disappeared, it becomes possible to wander through vestiges and ruins. The whole of mankind becomes a kind of imaginary museum." Paul Ricoeur *"History and Truth"*

The knowledge and existence of several cultures opens up endless possibilities in the study of Literature written in the English Language. In Pakistan, as we struggle to analyse our own culture and heritage; the study of certain texts repeated several times in English Literature, present us with an exclusive culture. American Literature has been added to the courses, but at the turn of the century, the work of Post-colonial writers is imperative, if literary study is to be more than just an embellishment, to literary works of writers from the subcontinent, in the mid and late twentieth century.

Culture is the site of transformation. Frantz Fanon declared it as the goal for determining the struggle for independence as well as for winning psychological and spiritual freedom. Post Colonial literature symbolically renovates and reshapes what had been accepted uncritically, and produced by a dominating metropolitan centre. New configurations arise as the discourses which support the myths of power, race classification, and the imagery of subordination are subverted. It is a freeing of voices, as an inflexible authority is gradually discarded. At the same time, one must be sensitive to the conditioned attitudes of the past, which remain or assume new forms.

In this article I propose to examine the culture around the period of the seventies and eighties in both Britain and India, when the age of



the empire, with colonialism as its consequence, was formally over. The politically conscious 1970s provoked search for new writings from newly emerging areas, involving research about the new British communities and questions about multiracial societies. Earlier, imperialism had a consolidating effect for around two hundred years and had licensed the cultural vision, creating its own norms.

This paper will compare the work of Paul Scott and Hanif Kureishi over two decades. Scott's most mature work was produced during the seventies, while Kureishi started winning accolades for his writing for the 'fringe' theatre, in the eighties. The core of the discussion will be on the enigma of identity, thirty or forty years after the British lost their Empire and the subcontinent attained Independence. Kureishi bases his work on the Asian community settled in the metropolitan centre of Britain, while Scott dramatises the retirement and old age of a British army couple who have chosen to 'stay on' in India, after the demise of the Empire in 1947. The past, however, impinges on the present, and it is part of the 'racial memory' which is an inherent and necessary component of the individual identity.

The prose fiction of both Scott and Kureishi, that portrays and investigates South Asian culture located in both the East and the west, is in sharp contrast to the fiction of earlier Anglo British writers. Even with sensitive writers like Forster, the portrayal of South Asians either conformed to the stereotypical image perceived of in that period, like that of Dr. Aziz in *A Passage to India*; or were generally voiceless or faceless.

Hanif Kureishi explores issues, which are inescapable in the twentieth century areas. The expanding waves of migration from South Asia, since World War II, either as a result of displacement or in response to the need for cheap labour to help the ravaged economy, evoked deep resentment. It also transformed the social, political and economic scene. By the 1980s, British families of South Asian origin, comprising three generations made up 45% of the population of Britain. Enoch Powell perceived them as "detachments of communities in the West Indies or India and Pakistan encamped in certain areas in London". His attitude addressed West Indians and Asians as "immigrants", in order to construct a nation that is white identified. Politicians like Enoch Powell blamed the migrants for unemployment, housing shortages and inadequate public services. The terms used for immigrants in speeches, like 'hordes',

'swamped', 'breed', drawn from vocabulary generally used for animal migration, and aroused fear and hatred. There was a general feeling that the Powellism of the 60s as a way of thinking, informed the official racism in Britain in 70s. This was the period when the Television comics used the Pakistanis as the butt of their humour. Stuart Hall feels that prior to that period the nation suffered "a kind of decisive mental repression about 'its imperial past'".

A major character in the novel "Buddha of Suburbia" by Hanif Kureishi pinpoints the predicament of the time, the loss of self when he states that it is vital "to locate myself and hear where the heart is". This thought is a leitmotif in his work and leads to an ongoing definition and redefinition of the self in his work. In his work, Kureishi sees the quest for identity as a negotiation of racism and colonialism when the relations between South Asian and white Britons are mediated by traces, memories and history of two hundred years of British imperialism and South Asian resistance. He thus examines what South Asian migrants, especially the Pakistanis, their children and even grandchildren experience daily in a dominantly white Britain. As he states in his essay *Rainbow sign*, both Pakistan and Britain have been interconnected for years, to the benefit of Britain, and therefore he examines what he called the 'moral quality' of the intermix. He describes what he portrays as the 'psychological loosening of the idea of the Empire'; as he continues to probe the value system of the society to ascertain its humanity in the face of breakdown, the respect it accords to individuals, the power it gives 'groups' and what it really means when it describes itself as 'democratic'.

Hanif Kureishi is concerned with people living on the edge of society and at the crossroads of social change, seeking to 'redefine themselves'. Without prejudice he explores the quest for identity by both the South Asian migrants in Britain, as well as the British who seek to locate themselves nationally in the latter half of the twentieth century. He questions Racism, as the major obstacle, an abdication of sense and reason - akin to what Fanon calls 'incomprehension'. His concern, like much of the post war fiction is concerned with the struggles of the under class seeking to find its place. The writing of those time is very 'self-conscious'. Thus his plays are peopled with racketeers, the young, the Pakistani entrepreneur, the hidebound and traditional immigrants, white street gangs, punks, squatters, drug addict, the nouveau riche, the unemployed and prostitutes as well as social workers and entrepreneurs.



The milleau in all his plays is race is race relationships, as the assorted punks, skin heads with the remnants of colonial, master-race attitudes take out their frustrations on the unlucky Pakistanis who cross their path. In *Outskirts*, one of the characters voice what was current in the thinking of many of the unemployed British at that time, that, the 'Pakistanis' were allowed into England to do the dirty work and be 'under' them, yet they saw them getting ahead with their own businesses, while the British faced unemployment and being laid off work. On the other hand the migrant, as a member of the colonised occupying the land of the former coloniser, even after three generations, waits in exile struggling to 'belong'. The themes of racism, violence and alienation with different ramifications are explored through various characters. The mood of opposition, dissent and anger is intensified in these plays as he evokes the struggle to assert the self.

Kureishi also delineates how both the generation gaps, as well as the gender issue the result of tradition and product of racial memory, creates a dynamic in the relationships of the South Asians. The older migrants have become frozen in time, according to the conditions prevailing in the home countries when they left. The actual situation at home has changed yet those of Pakistani origin settled abroad, are more Pakistani in their attitudes, than their own countrymen. Secondly as they are excluded from the national community, they try to replicate the community they have left behind by transplanting the cultural practices of that land, to Britain. The males are chauvinistic almost obsessive in their desire to 'protect' their women, denying them freedom of thought or action, while they themselves indulge in varieties of decadence. The sense of powerlessness experienced by them in a white racist society often leads them to seek compensation at home, by asserting their power over women. In the safety of their families, they seek to redeem the 'masculinity', which they feel is denied to them in a white society.

The older women, part of the same tradition, are unable to question as they are merely tied to domestic chores and lack opportunities to be companions to their husbands or be exposed to foreign influences. Duty and 'obligation' bind both older and younger women in different ways, as they wait on their men hand and foot, and serve as scapegoats for their frustration and ill humour. The younger women torn between family loyalties and the desire for freedom to build their own lives resort to subterfuge to lead their own lives or openly rebel against their families.

There is good portrayal of affluent Pakistanis from rich feudal and army backgrounds settled in Britain who concentrate on their own upward mobility and know how to exploit the system and are engaged in shady deals. Some of the younger members, affected, by the market forces determine on a single-minded course, uncommitted to any particular group or ideology, to achieve financial success at any cost. They believe the answer to their problems is financial viability.

In nearly all his plays, however, Kureishi brings also asserts that the greatest strength of the Pakistanis in Britain is their strong tendency to build community by helping and protecting each other. In *Borderline* he portrays how groups can unite in a collective concern for each other. Yasmin urges Amina to keep the lights on at night, "So people can know we're here". (p. 168) Another character, Anwar, feels that being British means the right to a voice and believes that one must 'reconstruct' the concept being British. He resents the representations of the South Asians in the British newspapers and the reluctance of the media to criticise Britain's racist police. The writer through his own essays and work feels strongly that the British need to relearn the new complexities of what being British is, and what kind of respect must be accorded to the individual who constitutes democracy. In his later plays there is a sense of Pakistanis building a community inside the larger slums.

Scott, writing much earlier explores a similar intermix, in the period before Partition, when the Indians are striving for the independence, that was promised to them and is now being unnecessarily delayed by their British masters. He strongly feels he states in the *Division of the Spoils*, that "For at least a hundred years India has formed part of England's idea about herself and for the same period India has been forced into a position of being a reflection of that idea" He is therefore preoccupied with the loss of India, and the effect it had on the Anglo Indian community in places like Mayapore and Pankot.

The four novels explore the identity of several of the characters who Scott feels have a genuine capacity to love. The fundamental barrier between the English and the Indian was the barrier of colour. The colour issue is discussed by many of the characters. Daphne notices how much larger the world has grown after she falls in love with Hari. This can be seen literally too as many areas of the city of Mayapore are opened up to her. Lilli Chatterjee as well as Edwina Crane, realise that it is the colour of the skin which is a barrier to genuine feeling, promoting fear and



dislike. It prevents people from entering into the feeling of each other. Daphne in "The Jewel and the Crown" also compares the system of British justice to a 'white robot' which cannot distinguish between love and rape.

Scott, is particularly interested in the plight of the person of indeterminate culture. The father of Hari Kumar, from a wealthy agricultural family consciously seeks to reject his 'Indianness', because he is struck by the power of the British in India. He fights for the right to be educated abroad but is not able to achieve any success as a result. He succumbs to traditional family pressures such as early marriage for himself, allowing his father to be a Sanyasi as well as letting his much loved, intelligent and partially educated sister marry a man who is completely unsuitable for her in every way. In Britain he is shocked and dismayed by the sight of barefoot children, ragged beggar, drunken women and evidence of cruelty to animals and humans: sins which in India only Indians were supposed to be capable of committing. What he could not achieve, he set out to do for his son by making him an Englishman to the extent of even altering his way of thinking.

Both Scott and Kureishi prove the truth of what Fanon predicted much earlier in *Black Skins and White Masks*, that the 'black man is sealed in his blackness' and 'the white man is sealed in his whiteness'. This assigns the black a 'state of non-being, a sterile and arid region'. Scott through the voice of Sister Ludmilla, brings out the real tragedy of Hari Kumar. Hari is only genetically and nominally an Indian. In every other respect he is a public school Englishman who does not realise he is Indian or what it means to be an Indian, until he returns to the country he left when he was two years old. Mr. Lindsay, the father of his college friends realises that it is only the colour of his skin that is different, as in every other way he is entirely English in culture and outlook. Hari's silence is the key element in affirming his courage and love for Daphne and his "Englishness". Connie openly says that if he had been an Englishman she could have understood his silence. His responses, attitudes, feelings and his way of thinking stem from the environment in which he was educated, but in India amongst the Indians he remains 'invisible' to his best friend. He suffers the fate, of what he signs himself to be, Philoctetes.

His character can be seen in juxtaposition with that of Merrick who strongly affirms the necessity of boundaries. Teddy Bingham defines the

defining line as the "pukka point of view". These finer distinctions, societal behaviour that would remain ambiguous, confused and muddled. Daphne resents these imperious distinctions and refuses to observe them. In the later novels we follow Sarah's self liberation from the 'Pukka' miss, the smug blind tradition of the inherited identity, the racial intolerance of class to the point where she is prepared to step into the real India, from the illusion of India created by the British.

The novel *Staying on* explores the direction that the new Indian society is taking, after they have achieved their nation and where the coloniser now takes the place of the 'other'. Scott's contemplation of identity, both for Hari, Indian by birth but British in nature, compelled to live in India; as well as for the Smalleys, a British army couple who have chosen to stay on in India; include questions regarding home, belonging, exile and alienation too.

In *Staying On* he presents the society of Pankot. The Anglo-Indian community which has deserted Pankot, has been replaced by a 'new race of sahibs and memsahibs of International status and connection. The British influence representing its ideas of civilisation pervades all. Ironically there is the same hierarchy but with different people. The new military order is represented by Col Menektara with his impeccable British ways, whose wife was "as big a bitch as Mildred Layton had been". In his portrait of the Indians Scott portrays the increasing rise of the 'bania' class. He reveals the crassness, mediocrity of spirit and desperate materialism of the market forces and the new commercial class, which has attained importance in India after the end of the Raj. The new race is represented by Tusker's employers in the pharmaceutical company he joined after retirement. There are the new successful middle-class entrepreneurs who are "wheelers and dealers", using fraudulent, corrupt practices, black money to make a place for their own selves, who are utterly indifferent to the state of the nation. Their symbol is the Shiraz hotel and their stranglehold is demonstrated through their conspiracy with Mrs. Bhoolabhoy to take over Smith's and raze it to the ground to extend their own building. The Desais who were nobody's now have political power which they use for personal gain. Mrs. Bhoolabhoy forces her husband to write a letter to evict the Smalleys.

The full impact of the change is felt by the Samlleys, as they had made different investments in India and they feel that the new India has let them down. The eviction with the desperate concern where to live



evokes echoes and is ultimately responsible for the death of Col Smalley. Scott reveals how the life of Lucy Smalley is stultified, doubly by the routine and hierarchy of Anglo-Indian military life, as well as the fact of being a woman. On her arrival in India she is condemned by her past as a stenographer, to be at the bottom of the memsahibs' pecking order. She is a woman tormented by a concern for the ultimate significance of her life and particularly her relationship with her husband and the way his career and retirement in India have both enhanced and darkened their chances of being happy. She too is always dependent on her husband's decision, career choices and ultimately his finances. In the sixties and seventies she had to make a sharp adjustment from being the Colonel's wife in the British army to being a person whose role is negligible or simply nonexistent.

Her incomprehension and confusion about the destruction of the past by the forces of the present forces in the present, which she is neither able to understand, let alone come to terms, with is shared with Mr. Bhoolabhoy. He had never regarded his hotel as just a business proposition, but had believed it to be a place, which has to keep its goodwill through skilful management and diplomatic relations. He realises too late that he has only been a 'caretaker of a development site'. When he dies, she realises that staying on has become a permanent and hopeless position for her and the ultimate pathos of her situation is made more poignant in the end by entering her thoughts as she sits on the 'throne' on the raised area in the bathroom, wondering what she will do now.

It is interesting to note the distinctive and unique forms, which the novelists use to examine their beliefs as well as draw the reader into the quest, so that there is a gaining of deeper political and historical insights. Both the writers focus a searchlight on every feature of the special concerns, which are both illuminated as well as analysed. They present widely differing view points through the voices of both major and minor characters; through their own dissimilar and special techniques.

Hanif Kureishi in his earliest writing deliberately chooses the screenplay. With the use of the first person voice of the character, a myriad of facets about the ramifications of living at that particular time, come alive. He presents naturalistic and very specific descriptions of sleazy characters and seedy settings like the place which have the smell of an "overripe gutter". He also talks of the 'Me' generation and the world of loud music, drugs and screaming protest. He deliberately sets

out to create nauseating effects, especially, when he portrays the rebellious punk group, which achieves success through the sheer strength of hate they express in their aggressive attire, make-up and dressing, screaming songs.

The surface of the Paul Scott's Quartet is historical and the attractiveness lies in the firm grasp of details of the period like the Anglo-Indian social round, religious traditions, the civil services etiquette the ever-present bric brac the core of the novel is philosophical, speculative and intangible. Scott, as the quote by Paul Ricour suggests, wanders through the "vestiges of civilisation", to understand the present moment. He uses various narrative forms and poetic techniques.

There is the shadowy presence of a historian who struggles to piece together the incidents that took place twenty years earlier. The historical detail are therefore meshed into the episodes of the story so as to bring out a pattern in the way events develop, relate to one another, forming a significant network of unrelated plots. He permits all minor characters to speak or act in a significant way before us for our honest and objective consideration, bringing out the fact that even the most minor person is the centre of his own universe, our equal, no matter how lowly he is.

As Sister Ludmilla explains that a specific historical event has no beginning and no end. "The past and the present are contained in our cupped hand". The events do not succeed each other in a linear way, they curve around from the future to the past and back into the present. The situation is a future to the past and back into the present. The situation is always Bibighar. The circles spiral outward, involving other people. Bibighar forced discussion, investigation, increasing knowledge. He shows how many characters cannot offer truthful accounts of the parts they have played in the events recorded eg White tries to painstakingly correct the bias in Reid's memoirs of the Mayapore disturbances, with many apologies and confessions of self-distrust. This reveals that the novelist can only add account and point of view to point of view, until it becomes obvious that the truth of the 'affair' can never be known about anything.

Scott's vision is solemn and dark, but there are redemptive elements that constantly assert themselves in some form of human



love that is selfless and giving that is able to correct the mistaken version of events that pass for history. The interweaving of practices produces new forms even as the older ones continue to exist.

On the whole the prose is slow moving, hesitant, grammatically complex with a heavily loaded sentence structure. There is ample opportunity of the subtle deployment of metaphors and symbols, which emphasise a richness of meaning and variety of tones. Many images recur several times and draw attention to the layers of meaning and philosophical thought, Scott is trying to convey.

His role is to map the unknown regions between and official version and the doubts that gossip and rumour have introduced. The reader is closely involved and becomes part of the never-ending quest for a complete and comprehensive truth.

After studying these writings, at the turn of the twentieth century, we wonder whether the dominant metropolitan centre will gradually diminish and dissolve as the marginalised border becomes more self-assertive. It requires a commitment to write and explain how the experience of one is tied down with another.

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## CONTENTS

<u>No.</u>	<u>Article</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.	Implementation of a Reading Innovation in the Classrooms of Multan	Samina Amin Qadir	1
2.	Carlyle's Reaction to Industrialism or Carlyle and the Mahcine	Rafiq Ahmad Dogar	39
3.	Linguistic Preparation for Reading Literary Texts	Surriya Shaffi Mir	63
4.	The Enigma of Identity and Racial Memory Paul Scott and Hanif Kureishi	Merle Jivanandham	73