

Report

Feedback Report on *Language and Language Teaching*

Since its inception in 2011, *LLT* has brought out 10 issues, two every year. The editorial committee felt that it was time to get *LLT* assessed in terms of the degree to which it had been able to meet its primary objective of establishing “*a dialogue between theory and practice so that practice contributes to theory as much as theory informs practice*”.

The purpose of *LLT* was to make new ideas and insights from research on language and its pedagogy accessible to practitioners, while at the same time inform theorists about the constraints around implementation of new ideas. Since its primary readers are practising language teachers and researchers, for this assessment purpose, one copy of all the back issues was sent to select school, college and university teachers requesting them to critically evaluate them and tell us whether *LLT* had been able to fulfil its objective. They were also requested to let us know about the areas where we had erred, and the changes/improvements we needed to introduce in order to make *LLT* more intelligible to teachers with a moderate proficiency level in English. When asked by reviewers whether there was a word limit, they were told to express their views freely, without any constraint of word limit. The reviewers who participated in this process included: Dr. Veena Kapur, Ms. Prachi Kalra, Professor Iqbal Judge, Ms. Snehlata Gupta, Dr. Chhaya Sawhney, Mr.

Ravinarayan Chakrakodi, Ms. Nivedita V. Bedadur, Dr. Sonika Kaushik, Dr. Kalpana Bora Barman, Ms. Rajni Dwivedi and Dr. Sabina Pillai.

The reviewers appreciated the fact that *LLT* addresses a wide readership and covers a vast variety of themes relating to language and language teaching in diverse circumstances. They also recognized that the articles used jargon free language and reported on pedagogical practices and their critiques, link between theory and practice, new ideas from research in language teaching, issues relating to disabled learners, hands on classroom language activities/games and book reviews of recent books on language and language teaching. Here are some extracts from their feedback:

- “The journal has a range of articles addressing different aspects of the pedagogy of language, from primary classes to the under-graduate level. Most articles are brief and written in accessible language. And they do include critiques of common classroom practices along with suggestions for alternative practices” (*LLT 1*: Prachi Kalra).
- “The language used in these articles is free of theoretical jargon and therefore is easily comprehensible to practicing teachers....Most of the articles try to link theories of language teaching, not

just English language teaching, to classroom practices” (*LLT* 2: Ravinarayan Chakrakodi).

- *LLT* “has enough meat to offer to in-service/pre-service teachers and teacher educators as it includes not only a range of articles, book reviews and suggested readings but also classroom activities.... This particular issue has a common theme of multilingualism running through seven out of thirteen articles. All these articles demonstrate why and how the use of mother tongue in the early years, or exposure to multiple languages can foster cognitive growth and high academic achievement... Overall, *LLT* is a great resource that offers insights and learning, hands on activities and pedagogical strategies from actual classrooms and contexts that the target audience would immensely benefit from” (*LLT* 3: Chhaya Sawhney).
 - “It is a unique journal as it seeks to draw a vast range of practitioners into the discourse on issues related to language and the teaching of language in diverse contexts. The articles are mostly of accessible length written in fairly easily comprehensible language” (*LLT* 4: Snehlata Gupta).
 - “*Language and Language Teaching* is perhaps the only journal in India devoted completely to language and its pedagogy.... The journal also helps us to see where we stand internationally in our understanding of issues related to language teaching. All the issues put together will definitely indicate a
- pattern of a certain kind.... The range of themes and languages is impressive” (*LLT* 5: Sonika Kaushik).
 - *LLT* provides “new ideas and insights from research on language and pedagogy.... Most of the articles are based on a reflective, critical analysis of actual classroom situations in India and the approach adopted by the writers is either that of applying pedagogical techniques to overcome problems being faced, or of improving the quality of teaching by adopting innovative strategies. In most of the articles the theoretical underpinnings of the suggested methods are elucidated.... Almost all articles maintain a good balance between theory and practice, seeking to inform rather than weigh down the teacher with academic jargon. Though none of the articles could be said to be path-breaking or new, yet they serve to re-call the teachers' attention to good practices that sometimes are forgotten in the pressures of day-to-day teaching.... The section on classroom activities would be particularly useful for the teacher who wishes to cut through the theorizing and wants merely a simple prescription slip to follow.... The book review sections are also informative, especially as the books reviewed are generally recently published” (*LLT* 7: Iqbal Judge).
 - “The journal is a good one as it covers a range of issues.... Ranging over a wide variety of topics, including book reviews, the *Language and Language Teaching* journal addresses a number of

relevant questions in the field of language and its teaching. Its relevance in providing a platform for deliberations on these issues cannot be argued with.... In *LLT*, Issue 8...., the focus is on the teaching of language in the classroom especially in a multilingual environment” (*LLT 8*: Kalpana Bora Burman).

- “Congratulations on a comprehensive issue on the subject of disabled learners and the challenges thereof....The papers by some scholars are insightful as they are a direct outcome of their classroom interventions, hence of immense value to scholars and practitioners and kudos to the content” (*LLT 10*: Sabina Pillai).
- “The articles have been selected very carefully....They discuss the idea of disability, how it is represented in society and analyse the same with examples; there are real classroom experiences that throw light on the challenges faced by students and teachers, what can be done in the classroom and what should be the role of the teacher” (*LLT 10*: Rajni Dwivedi).

As mentioned earlier, the reviewers also made some suggestions for improving *LLT*. Some of the suggestions are given here as follows:

Among other things, Kalra, in commenting on a particular paper suggested that theory and practice should be organically linked and the theory section should be shorter than the practice section in order to reach out to teachers. Nivedita, in her feedback on *LLT 6*, commented on the difficulty experienced in using a theoretical paper in a classroom transaction or a workshop.

Kalra was very critical when she said that some of the articles included a whole range of pedagogy-related concepts and ideas without a reasonable explanation for them. According to her, such articles should focus on fewer ideas to make the papers more readable.

Chakrakodi drew attention to a serious drawback in the journal when he remarked: “Original studies on language learning and teaching seem to be very few in the 10 issues that have been published so far.” He reminded the editors about the need for an editorial in each issue and suggested that the editors needed to exercise more rigorous scrutiny before accepting articles for publication. According to him, some articles made tall claims and sweeping statements with regards to certain concepts, but failed to explore them in depth. He suggested that the editors inform the contributors about the impact of the journal and the data bases where it was indexed. He further suggested that the editors should make *LLT* a multilingual journal by including research that is being done and reported in Indian languages.

Sawhney opined that the articles that did not offer any concrete suggestions and could not be substantiated by facts should be left out. She further recommended that greater weightage be given to articles that reflect practice rather than theory. She commented that since most of the articles published in *LLT* had been written either by researchers or consultants who had very little hands on experience of classroom teaching, more practising teachers needed to write for *LLT*.

Commenting on classroom activities, Kaushik observed: “It will help the readers

if the activities are presented as part of a larger plan of teaching. A better alternative to classroom activities could be offering coherent language lesson plans which include an activity or two. This could also include suggesting better use of textbooks and different ways of using children's literature for language teaching.”

Barman pointed out that there should be more articles on how to improve the teaching of languages at a higher level; this included remedial measures that teachers/parents need to undertake. She suggested that since most articles were written by English teaching people/faculty, *LLT* should include articles focussing on the difficulties faced by non-English teaching people in higher classes.

Kapur expressed the need for more articles in which the focus was on how practice contributes to theory. The contribution of the practitioner was vital, since real life classrooms are the crucibles where theory is transacted. How theory and content is transacted by the practitioner itself informs theory and highlights the limitations of research. A mechanism should be in place that ensures that the practitioner appreciates the importance of their contribution.

Pointing to the need for an editorial, Pillai observed that *LLT* does not connect with the reader due to the absence of a voice that speaks to the reader on behalf of *LLT*. It seems like an impersonal vehicle carrying sundry voices without a link to the big picture. Pillai further added that while adhering to a theme is worthwhile, every issue could also carry a general menu of papers to ensure wider interest and

readership. For example, one of the issues was centred around the theme of disability to the exclusion of any other topic/theme. That can lead to limited interest and readership. She further suggested that a “Readers' Page” carrying the readers' comments and observations be included to make the journal more interactive and less remote.

Many contributors including Pillai and Dwivedi recommended that an issue should not carry more than one contribution by the same author.

Nivedita suggested that *LLT* should also include short conceptual pieces of one to two pages with examples to explain the concepts.

Kalra and Prachi pointed out to the need for pictures of pedagogical strategies as well as writing samples of children to make theory more accessible.

Prachi recommended that a section on children literature be included.

Chakrakodi expressed the need for a separate section, “Research Reports”, where action research studies carried out by teachers and teacher educators could be published. He further recommended that the journal incorporate studies on research methodologies, data collection methods, statistical tools and research findings.

Snehlata suggested that there should be more articles that address the most problematic everyday practices and myths and false beliefs about language and language learning in classrooms today. According to her, such articles should be strongly grounded in research and theory,

with implications for instruction clearly spelt out. She further recommended that a mechanism for feedback on articles and other submissions be included in the journal to make it more interactive. She advocated the creation of an online forum where teachers and other readers could engage in discussions or conversation around the articles in any given issue.

Commenting on the book reviews, Kaushik suggested that books in Indian languages, both for children and on children also be reviewed in the journal. In addition, materials developed under various programmes and by organizations and private publishers can also be reviewed. This includes manuals, graded series, cards, charts, vocabulary development games, worksheets and other such material. A lot of materials and methods are available and very often teachers and teacher educators do not understand the underlying assumptions behind a given “kit” or “set”.

Barman commented, given that NE states are not only multilingual but are exposed to English very early in life (even before school), *LLT* should also include articles on the NE states. She added that in Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland, Nagamese is spoken, which includes English words. How does one teach English in such an environment?

The editors express their gratitude to the reviewers for expressing their appreciation for the journal and their suggestions towards improving the journal. The editors will take care to incorporate them in the forthcoming issues.

About the Reviewers

Dr. Veena Kapur, Associate Professor, University of Delhi, has been teaching for over thirty-five years. Her areas of special interest are language teaching, women's studies, alternative pedagogies as well as the use of technology in education. Dr. Kapur is presently working with national research and educational bodies as a resource person.

veenakapur821@gmail.com

Ms. Prachi Kalra teaches in the Department of Elementary Education at Gargi College, University of Delhi. She teaches courses in the pedagogy of language. Her main interests are children's literature and storytelling. Currently, she is doing a PhD on how stories can enable critical pedagogy in the elementary classroom.

prachikalra@yahoo.com

Professor Iqbal Judge, currently Head, PG Department of English, PG Government College for Girls, Chandigarh, has been teaching for 36 years. Her core interests include ELT, particularly classroom methodology, materials development and assessment. She is also keenly interested in gender studies, theatre and fine arts.

iqbaljudge_1@yahoo.co.in

Ms. Snehlata Gupta has been teaching English under the Directorate of Education, Government of Delhi for more than twenty years. Her areas of interest include literature for children and young adults; reading, writing and the teaching-learning of English as a second language, especially in students from underserved communities. At present she is working on a PhD at the Faculty of Education, University of Delhi.

snehlatag@gmail.com

Dr. Chhaya Sawhney teaches Linguistics to the students of Elementary Education at Gargi College, University of Delhi. Her interests include teacher education, and interacting with and learning from her students about their internship experiences at school.

chhaya_sawhney@yahoo.com

Mr. Ravinarayan Chakrakodi is a member of the faculty at the Regional Institute of English South India, Bengaluru. He has an MA in TESOL from the University of Lancaster, UK. He is involved in in-service teacher education programmes, curriculum design and materials production. He has worked as a member of the D El Ed curriculum renewal committee for English, Government of Karnataka and as a Chairperson of the Textbook Committee for English.

ravirie@gmail.com

Ms. Nivedita V. Bedadur teaches at the University Resource Centre of Azim Premji University, Bangalore. She has 29 years of experience in English Language Teaching and teacher training in India and Nepal. She is currently designing courses for teachers and teacher educators in the area of literacy, language teaching and educational psychology.

nivedita@azimpremjifoundation.org

Dr. Sonika Kaushik is a senior consultant in the Early Literacy Programme of NCERT. Her areas of interest include development of reading and writing in the early years and children's literature. She has taught in primary schools and teacher education programmes and has a doctoral degree in early literacy.

sonikakaushik@yahoo.co.in

Dr. Kalpana Bora Barman teaches English at a College in Guwahati, Assam. She did her PhD from the Indian Institute of Technology,

Guwahati. Her areas of academic interest include Indian Writing in English, Women's Literature and Postcolonial Literature.

klpna.bora@gmail.com

Ms. Rajni Dwivedi has worked with various states for developing curricula and textbooks up to elementary classes. She has developed materials for capacity building of pre-service and in-service teachers in several states. Currently, she is doing translations and developing/editing materials for teachers and teacher educators.

rajni@vidyabhawan.org

Dr. Sabina Pillai is an Associate Professor of English at a Delhi University college. Her research interests include Literary Theory, feminist literature, ELT and applied linguistics.

sabinapillai2000@yahoo.com