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Everyday literacies in education: insights from using ‘real literacies’ and the ‘linguistic landscape’ for teaching English to deaf young adults in India

Letramentos cotidianos na educação: reflexões sobre o uso dos “letramentos reais” e da “paisagem linguística” no ensino de inglês para adultos jovens surdos na Índia

La lectoescritura del día a día en educación: reflexiones sobre el uso de las "alfabetizaciones reales" y el "paisaje lingüístico" en la enseñanza del inglés a jóvenes sordos de la India

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ARTIGO

RESUMO

Neste artigo, discuto a minha experiência em dois projetos de pesquisa-ação sobre o desenvolvimento do ensino de inglês para adultos jovens surdos na Índia, em Gana e em Uganda. Com foco na Índia, eu reflito sobre como nos baseamos em dois conceitos, “letramentos reais” (ROGERS, 1999) e “paisagens linguísticas” (CONOZ; GORTER, 2008), para construir uma pedagogia comunicativa da linguagem centrada no/a aluno/a. Adotamos essas perspectivas para criar conjuntamente com os estudantes um programa de estudos baseado em seus usos cotidianos de inglês. O projeto buscou empoderar jovens surdos por meio do desenvolvimento de sua capacidade de se comunicarem em inglês, valorizando também a sua língua materna – a língua de sinais –, oferecendo, portanto, uma educação bilíngue adicional. Neste trabalho, discuto como estudantes e tutores se engajaram com a abordagem. Eles questionaram ativamente alguns dos nossos planejamentos e sugeriram adaptações para as atividades propostas inicialmente. Concluo o artigo com algumas reflexões sobre o que podemos extrair da nossa experiência no que diz respeito à adaptabilidade e à relevância dos 'letramentos reais' e das 'paisagens linguísticas' para o trabalho com estudantes surdos.

Palavras-chave: letramentos reais; paisagens linguísticas; surdos; Inglês; Índia.

ABSTRACT

In this paper I discuss the experience of two action research projects to develop English literacy teaching for deaf young adults in India, Ghana and Uganda. With a focus on India, I reflect on how we drew on two concepts, ‘real literacies’ (ROGERS, 1999) and ‘linguistic landscapes’ (CONOZ; GORTER, 2008) to design a student-centred and communicative language pedagogy. We used these perspectives to co-create with students a curriculum based on their everyday uses of English. The project sought to empower deaf young people by developing their ability to communicate in English, while also valuing their first language - a sign language – thus offering an additive bilingual education. In the paper, I discuss how students and tutors engaged with the approach. They actively challenged some of our plans and asked for adaptations to our planned lesson activities. I conclude my paper with some thoughts on what to take from our experience with regards to the adaptability and relevance of ‘real literacies’ and ‘linguistic landscapes’ for work with deaf students.

Keywords: real literacies; linguistic landscapes; deaf; English; India.

RESUMEN

En este artículo analizo mi experiencia con dos proyectos de investigación-acción sobre el desarrollo de la enseñanza de la lectoescritura en inglés con jóvenes sordos en la India, Ghana y Uganda. Centrándome en la India, reflexiono sobre dos conceptos en los que nos basamos para diseñar una pedagogía comunicativa del lenguaje centrada en el alumno, "alfabetizaciones reales" (ROGERS, 1999) y "paisajes lingüísticos" (CONOZ; GORTER, 2008). Utilizamos estas perspectivas para crear conjuntamente con los estudiantes un plan de estudios basado en sus propias experiencias cotidianas con el inglés. El proyecto buscaba empoderar a los jóvenes sordos a través del desarrollo de su capacidad para comunicarse en inglés, al mismo tiempo que valorando su lengua materna -la lengua de signos-, ofreciendo así una educación bilingüe aditiva. En el artículo, analizo cómo los estudiantes y los tutores se involucraron con este enfoque, cuestionando activamente algunos de nuestros planes y sugiriendo adaptaciones de las actividades programadas. Concluyo mi artículo con algunas reflexiones sobre lo que podemos extraer de nuestra experiencia en lo que respecta a la adaptabilidad y la relevancia de las "alfabetizaciones reales" y los "paisajes lingüísticos" para el trabajo con alumnos sordos.

Palabras clave: alfabetizaciones reales; paisajes linguísticos; sordo, Ingles; India.

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper I discuss insights from two recent projects with young deaf[1] adults in India, Ghana and Uganda. The aim of these projects was to develop and try out a learner-centred and collaborative approach to teaching English that considered the specific context and aspirations of young deaf people in the countries the project was located in. Specifically, we aimed to develop a curriculum that was relevant to our students' everyday uses of English and that built on their prior knowledge and experience of the language. To achieve this, we drew inspiration from two concepts, both of which have been used previously to support literacy and language learning, but not in the specific way we use them in our project. The first of these is the idea of 'real literacies', while the second is known as 'linguistic landscapes'.

In what follows, I first provide information about the projects and the contexts we worked in. I then introduce the two concepts that inspired our work. In the main part of the paper, I offer two examples of how we worked with these concepts in our classrooms, what kind of curricula and learning activities were developed and how the teachers (whom we called tutors) and students engaged with the approach we offered. I conclude with some thoughts on what can be learned from our experience with regards to the adaptability of these approaches and their relevance for working with deaf students.

1. THE PEER-2-PEER DEAF MULTILITERACIES PROJECT

Beginning with a one-year pilot project in 2016-17, we – a group of researchers and educators from different disciplines[2] - developed and tried out an approach to teaching English reading and writing skills to deaf young adults in India based on what is known as 'real literacies' (ROGERS, 1999). A 'real literacies' approach means that the curriculum of a literacy programme is not based on a literacy primer or textbook, but on students' everyday uses of written language and literacy. This includes writing in their environment, in our case, the cities our students lived in. Writing in the environment, for example on billboards or public notices, is also referred to as 'linguistic landscapes', associated with a field of research and pedagogical practice at the interface of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics.

In a 3-year-long follow-on project (2017-2021), the approach was further developed and implemented in a wider range of countries (India, Ghana and Uganda) as well as extended to

[1] In this paper (as in other publications about the Peer-To-Peer Deaf Multiliteracies project) I use lowercase 'deaf' and not the deaf-Deaf distinction that has in the past been used by researchers. This is in line with a new convention in Deaf Studies which seeks to avoid static notions of deaf experience and identity (Kusters et al. 2017).

[2] The research team were Ulrike Zeshan, Julia Gillen, Sibaji Panda, Uta Papen, Deepu Manavalamamumi, Nirav Pal, Noah Ahereza and Marco Nyarko. Our project partners in India were the Delhi Foundation for Deaf Women and the Indore Bilingual Deaf Academy.

children[3]. To take account of the multimodal and digital nature of many English literacy practices the students engaged with, in the second and longer project we also used ideas from 'multiliteracies' (COPE; KALANTZIS, 2009). Bringing these various ideas together we designed and implemented a way of teaching English to deaf students that we called 'Peer-2-Peer Deaf Multiliteracies'.

In the present paper I discuss experiences of working with young adults in two classes in India, as part of the second project. This project began with a six-month long training course for tutors and research assistants, held in one of the project locations in India. All the tutors and research assistants were from the local deaf community. None of them were formally trained teachers; some were university graduates (BA). The training was conducted in Indian Sign Language (ISL). For all our tutors, research assistants and students, ISL was their main language of communication. Colleagues from Uganda and Ghana had a working knowledge of ISL, and where necessary we used International Sign to support communication.

Teaching took place in two cycles of 7 months each, in 2018 and 2019, with daily lessons of 90 to 120 minutes. We used pre-and post-tests to assess gains in English. The classes were implemented in collaboration with a range of partners in each of the countries[i].

The students in our Indian classes were young adults, in their late teens and early twenties. English was a language they interacted with on a regular basis, which they had some knowledge of, had studied to a greater or lesser extent at school and wanted to become more proficient in. Access to education for deaf people in India is severely limited. There are few schools for the deaf. The majority of deaf children attend mainstream schools where they are unlikely to be taught by teachers who know sign language and where their access to the curriculum therefore is severely restricted (Randhawa 2006). Access to hearing aids or cochlear implants is limited to families with the necessary resources. Sign languages have been and continue to be undervalued and subject to prejudices. Deaf people not only experience a lack of opportunities but can also face discrimination. While our projects aimed to develop the students' English, supporting their first language, their sign language, was a core part of our ethics. In practice, our teaching was bilingual-bimodal, with ISL and English being used in the lessons. This can also be described as an additive bilingualism (SWANWICK, 2017). Gains in sign language were valued and often commented on positively by students and teachers.

Most of the students in our classes were still at school or college, some were working, others were helping their families. Our classes were an additional learning opportunity that they attended voluntarily and could, and sometimes did, leave if the classes didn't suit their interests or needs.

The data I draw on here include classroom observations, by the research assistants and by ourselves (the international collaborators), video-recordings of lessons or parts of lessons,

[3] Both projects were funded by the ESRC and the former Department for International Development. We are grateful to our funders for making this project possible. I am particularly grateful to the tutors, the students and the research assistants who took part in the project, who let me observe their lessons and who shared their insights with me.

photographs (of lesson activities), learning materials, conversations with students and tutors (during our visits) as well as examples of student texts produced in lessons – what we call portfolios. These portfolios were collected by the tutors monthly. Tutors also wrote monthly reports detailing the themes and activities they focused on in their lessons, commenting on how these were engaged with by the students, and discussing any difficulties with the lessons that they had experienced. We also have records of extended WhatsApp conversations, between tutors, between tutors and research assistants, and also with the UK-based researchers who were in regular contact with local tutors and research assistants throughout the project. For this paper I also draw on insights from my participation in the training (Odisha, 2018) and while visiting one of our project sites, in Indore, in September 2019. I spent a week with two of our classes, daily visiting lessons and working with the tutors and one of the research assistants.

2. ‘REAL LITERACIES’ AND MULTILITERACIES

The ‘real literacies’ approach (herefter real literacies) was originally developed for use with adults learning to read and write (NIRANTAR, 2007; STREET, 2012), with instruction usually taking place in the students’ first language. Real literacies represents a deliberate approach by some of the major theorists in New Literacy Studies to develop the pedagogical implications of the understanding of literacy as social practice (STREET; BAKER; ROGERS, 2006). Real literacies is based on the idea that for literacy learning to be meaningful and relevant, it must be firmly connected to learners’ existing literacy practices. In other words, the learners’ everyday uses of reading and writing need to form the basis of the curriculum (STREET, 2012). Students’ cultural understandings of literacy as and the values they attach to different literacy practices need to be considered. Real literacies assumes that even novice learners have prior experience and knowledge of written language and that any teaching needs to build on this prior experience. Real literacies was developed in response to the limitations of conventional literacy teaching for adults, where the materials used were often not relevant to the adult learners. Those who succeeded in learning to read and write in these classes found it difficult to make use of their skills in everyday contexts that involve reading and writing (ROGERS, 1999).

In its original form, real literacies was implemented as a training programme for literacy teachers and curriculum developers, first in India in 2001, and later in Eritrea and Uganda. In these programmes, the trainees researched their own communities to identify the literacy practices that adults encountered or engaged with in their daily lives. We can also say that the trainee teachers acted as ethnographers of local literacy practices. Based on their findings, they developed curricula and materials for literacy teaching. In the Peer 2 Peer Deaf Multiliteracies project I used this approach when training our deaf tutors and research assistants. I asked them to take photographs of texts they could find in the environment and to collect documents related to everyday activities. In

the training room, we worked on how these texts could be used for vocabulary work, comprehension activities, and grammar teaching (PAPEN; TUSTING, 2019). Initially, we used mostly non-digital texts, including signs, advertisements and forms. When our classes started, it was the students themselves who were asked to bring to the lessons real texts that they wanted to work on, becoming ethnographers of their English literacy practices. In the main part of this paper, I will show how this was done.

After the first project, the concept of multiliteracies was added to our theoretical framework. I will only briefly introduce this concept here, the role it played in the lessons is discussed in more detail in another paper (PAPEN; GILLEN, 2022). Developed by an international group of educators who were aware not only of the growing importance of digital technologies but also of the persistent inequalities in literacy education, multiliteracies sought to develop an inclusive education promoting the participation of all young people and children in their communities, in society and in the economy (NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996).

The two concepts, real and multiliteracies, have much in common, and suggest similar pedagogical approaches. Both are oriented towards social justice and inclusivity. Both seek to link teaching with ‘real-world contexts’ (MILLS, 2009, p. 118) ‘building on the lifeworld experiences of students, situating meaning-making in real-world contexts’ (MILLS, 2009, p. 108). Both real literacies and multiliteracies conceptualise education from a non-deficit perspective, which is particularly relevant in the context of working with deaf young people and sign languages. The orientation towards inclusivity and social justice that both concepts share is consistent with our belief in deaf bilingual education, as explained above. What multiliteracies adds to the real literacies approach is a more explicit orientation towards students’ agency and input (HEPPLE et al., 2014). The latter was relevant to us, as it was in line with the general ethos of our work. Respect for deaf students and their interests was paramount and we aspired for our project to be genuinely collaborative, promoting deaf student and tutors’ empowerment and capacity-building.

3. LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES (LL)

The idea of linguistics landscapes and their uses for literacy and language education had originally not been part of our conceptual framework. However, elements of the linguistic landscape first popped up in our training and were often used in the teaching. The LL can be defined as the ‘geospatially situated domain of material texts and textual practices in public space’ (MALINOWSKI; DUBREIL, 2019, p. 1). In our projects these public spaces were the cities in India, Ghana and Uganda where our learners lived and attended classes. LL researchers have previously noted on the exceptional role of English in many contexts where it is best considered a ‘non-foreign language’ (BEN-RAFAEL et al., 2006). This was also the case in the contexts in which we worked. These included cities such as Kampala, New Delhi and Indore. While these are ‘multilingual cityscape(s)’

(CENOZ; GORTER, 2008, p.268), English is very much present in their linguistic landscape. English is widely used on commercial signs and public notices and can be found on the often handmade signs of local traders and businesses.

The role of the linguistic landscape as a resource for language learning and teaching has been acknowledged in previous studies (see GORTER, 2018; MALINOWSKI; DUBREIL, 2019; MALINOWSKI; MAXIM; DUBREIL, 2020). Such work has highlighted the importance of texts in the public sphere as a source of 'authentic' language input (ALADJEM; JOU, 2016; MALINOWSKI; DUBREIL, 2019). For us, the LL provided a readily available source of relevant texts to which the students were regularly exposed, for example on their journeys to and from the classes. When working with deaf people, the LL was particularly important given the focus on written English. Our students in India had smart phones making it easy for them to take photographs of LL items and bring them to class.

Linguistic landscape research includes two strands. The first, with a sociolinguistic orientation, examines linguistic landscapes in relation to multilingualism, the status of minority languages, language policies, language vitality and language revitalisation (see for example PUETZ; MUNDT, 2018.). Closer to our work is the second strand, where the LL is used for language and literacy learning, in second and foreign language contexts. Studies have been undertaken for example in Japan (ROWLANDS, 2013) and Mexico (SAYER, 2010). Sayer's work in particular has similarities with our approach. His Mexican students of English researched the uses and social meanings of English in the linguistic landscape of their neighbourhood. Sayer explains that this kind of work can include work on vocabulary or grammatical features found on the linguistic landscape texts. As I will explain later, this proved particularly important in our project.

We can see from this brief introduction into linguistic landscape work for language learning the obvious overlap with the concept of real literacies and its applications. As explained above, real literacies is also about focusing learning on real-world or authentic uses of language. The linguistic landscape, while not named as such, has been a core element of real literacies from its inception, recognising that 'literacy in the environment', for example on streets and houses, is an important source of exposure to and learning of literacy (ROGERS, 1999). LL research too includes initiatives that focus on reading skills. This type of work is often referred to as 'environmental print' used with children (see GILES; TUNK, 2010). A similar idea is that of 'English literacy walks' (CHERN; DOOLEY, 2014) as an activity for English language teaching, where students explore the written English used in the linguistic landscape. Chern and Dooley explain that the linguistic landscape can be used to develop literacy skills such as decoding and comprehension, as well as pragmatic knowledge and critical analysis of the texts found.

Real literacies and linguistic landscape for language learning share a desire to offer a curriculum that does not privilege textbooks but uses 'authentic, contextualized input' (CENOZ; GORTER, 2008, p. 273). This was particularly relevant to us because of the lack of English textbooks

suitable for deaf students in the countries in which we worked. Given this lack, LL items provided us with learning materials that were relevant and close to the students' everyday language experiences.

4. TEACHING WITH REAL LITERACIES AND LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES: TWO EXAMPLES

4.1 Example 1: A form to open a bank account

My first example illustrates how we used the real literacies approach by looking at a series of lessons on an application form to open a bank account.

These took place over the course of a week in December 2018, with lessons lasting 90 minutes each weekday. The class was offered by one of our project partners, the Dehli Foundation for Deaf Women, from May 2018 to January 2019. There were 9 female students aged between 16 and 27 years.

The form was brought to the lessons by one of the students, illustrating here how our plans for a learner-centred curriculum have been realised. Deepu Manavalamamuni, the tutor, had asked his students to bring to the lessons any authentic texts, which he called 'real life English', that they wanted to learn from. The form, written entirely in English (see figure 1 below), contains a series of questions that have to be answered and boxes that have to be ticked.

How Deepu taught with this form illustrates the kind of work around a real text that we know has also happened in other lessons and other classes. The level of vocabulary and the specificity of the terms used in the form required a lot of work on comprehension. Figure 2 below shows some of the terms that the students learned about. In his tutor report, Deepu explains that much of the lesson time was taken up with helping the students with what he calls 'world knowledge' related to banking. What he means here is that while he had to explain to the students how the English words translated into sign language, this also involved familiarising them with key concepts related to banking such as the difference between savings and current accounts.

In a practical exercise, Deepu asked the girls to each fill in a copy of the form (figures 3 and 4 below).

Figure 1: Application form to open a bank account

Figure 2: Banking terms and concepts

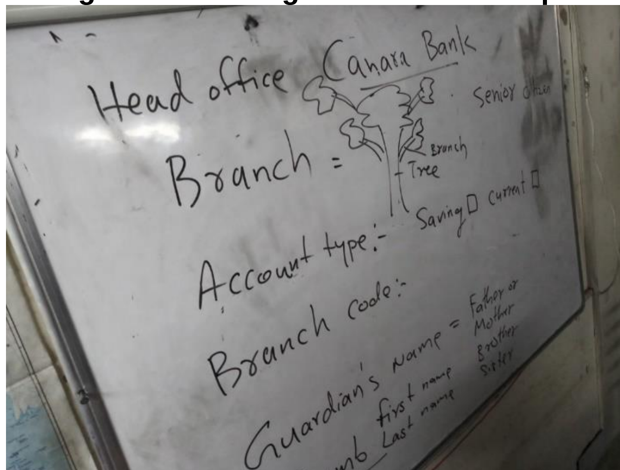
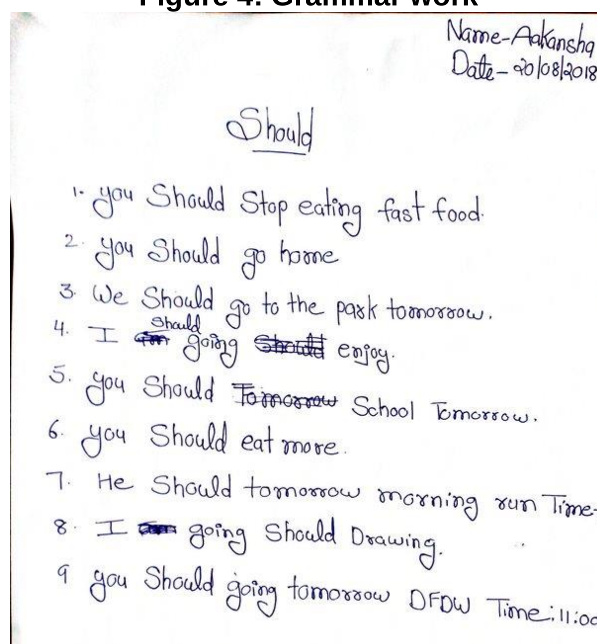


Figure 3: The students complete their forms

Figure 4: Grammar work



Name-Aakansha
Date-20/08/2018

Should

1. you Should Stop eating fast food.
2. you Should go home
3. We Should go to the park tomorrow.
4. I ~~am~~ Should going ~~Should~~ enjoy.
5. you Should ~~Tomorrow~~ School Tomorrow.
6. you Should eat more.
7. He Should tomorrow morning run Time-6
8. I ~~am~~ going Should Drawing.
9. you Should going tomorrow DFDW Time: 11:00

Grammar was also included in the lessons. This focused on the meaning and use of the modal verb should. At the bottom of the form, it says: 'The photograph should be signed by the applicant across the image'. After explaining the meaning of should, the Deepu asked the students to make their own sentences using the word. He noticed that some of the students instead of coming up with their own sentences copied examples from the internet. In his report he also explains that he found it difficult to explain English grammar points found in real texts such as this one. I will come back to this in the discussion section.

4.2 Example 2: Shopping and sales

In my second example, I describe a series of lessons that took place in one of our classes in Indore. These lessons focused on English texts related to shopping, sales and customer feedback. The class, hosted by our second Indian project partner, the Indore Deaf Bilingual Academy, had 13 students who received daily lessons, offered from June 2018 to January 2019.

Similar to the previous example, the lessons I am looking at here – taking place over one week in August and another week in September 2018 - were initiated by the students, who brought to the class texts that they wanted to work on. In this second example, these were objects from the linguistic landscape. In many contemporary cities and towns, shopping malls and markets, are important parts of the linguistic landscape. Indore, as I was able to see for myself during my visit in 2019, a city of over 3 million inhabitants in the north-east of India, is no exception.

The lessons I am focusing on here began when the students brought to the class pictures they had taken while visiting a shopping mall in Indore. In the shop windows (see figure 5 below) they found posters advertising a discount of 'flat 40%' for clothes. They did not know what 'flat' meant

in this context. They also found posters offering discounts of ‘up to 60%’ reduction and they were not sure what the phrase ‘up to’.

Figure 5: Photo of a shop window taken by the students

Figure 6: Sales advert found by the students on the internet

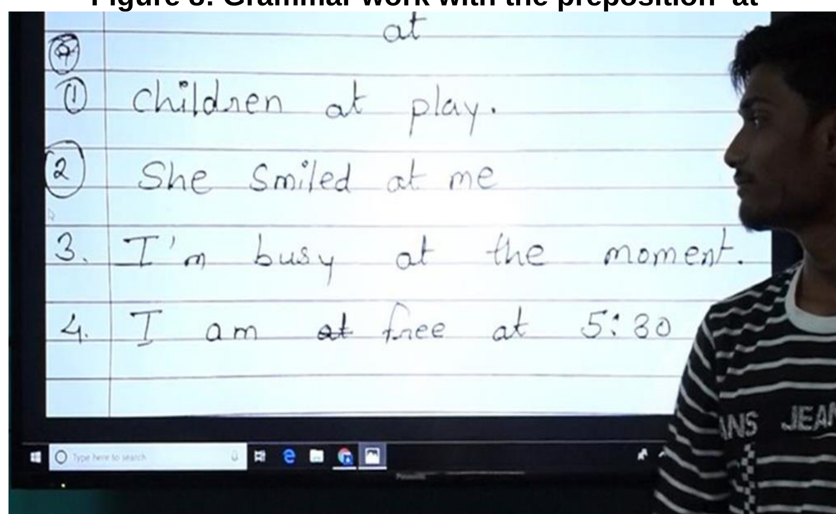
In class, the students discussed the difference between these two discounts with the help of their tutor Ankit Vishwakarma. They searched the internet for other examples of sales advertisements, using similar slogans and terms. One of the adverts they found is shown in figure 6. The students created what could be seen as a small ‘curated digital collection of pictures of signs’ (KIM; CHESNUT, 2021, p. 71) that supported their understanding of words and phrases used in the context of sales.

Shopping was a shared interest of several students. In an earlier lesson, a student who had been to a jewelry shop with her parents brought the photo in figure 7 into class and explained that

they walked past this rating tool on their way out of the shop. She did not know what the work ‘rate’ means.

Figure 7: Photo taken by a student at the exit of a jewelry shop

Figure 8: Grammar work with the preposition ‘at’



The LL items in these examples provided opportunities to work on vocabulary that was close to the students’ everyday lives (see SAYER, 2010). Another word unknown to some of the students was ‘experience’. The students also did an exercise on the preposition ‘at’, where they tried to come up with a range of example sentences for ‘at’ which they then explained in ISL (see figure 8). Prepositions were a frequent hurdle, if not a conundrum, for the students, because the way prepositions are expressed in ISL is fundamentally different from English. There may not be a separate sign for a preposition, because its meaning is expressed in the context of the sentence.

In line with our bilingual-bimodal approach, it was common for unknown words, phrases or sentences on LL items and other authentic texts to be discussed and explained in ISL, to ensure that everyone in the group was clear about their meaning and of the appropriate signs or combinations of sings to use when translating into ISL. We know from tutor and research assistant reports, that these signed explanations (see figure 9 below) were highly valued by the students. While all our students, as explained above, used ISL daily, their levels of proficiency varied. This was mainly due to the age at which they had learned ISL, with some having being exposed to it from childhood (as their parents also used it) and others only learning it in their teens. Improving their ISL was a benefit of our classes for many of the students. In some of the lessons, such as this one, the tutors filmed the students signing explanations of English words, as shown in figure 9. These short videos were uploaded to an online learning platform shared by all our classes. The LL texts were also added. In this way, the lessons conducted in one class were available to the students in the other sites, where they could be replicated[ii].

Figure 9: a student explaining the word 'jewels' in ISL

5. DISCUSSION

The examples I discussed in the previous section illustrate the kind of work with real literacies and linguistic landscape texts that was frequently used in the classes with young adults in India. In these lessons, linguistic landscape items and other 'real' texts were a source of 'authentic second language (L2) input' (MALINOWSKI; DUBREIL, 2019, p. 1, see also ALADJEM; JOU, 2016). Work on the vocabulary of these texts was combined with pragmatic knowledge related to the texts' meaning and function. 'World knowledge', as Deepu called it - what we would perhaps refer to as life skills - provided additional learning to the students and was closely linked to work on the texts' uses.

Another example of working with the LL is when the students visited their local railway station. We had tried out these 'literacy walks' or 'vocabulary tours' (KIM; CHESNUT, 2021, p. 76) in the

training where one of the research assistants went out with the trainee tutors to the local zoo to photograph signage and to film explanations in ISL. This was later taken up with two of the classes in India. Working with the LL, as we can see here, provided an opportunity for language teaching to reconsider 'the places of learning', as suggested in a recent publication (MALINOWSKI; MAXIM; DUBREIL, 2021, p. 5). A railway station provides an ideal opportunity for extended language learning, in our case, that was perhaps better described as extended text work. Understanding the words on signs such as 'enquiry window' or 'courier office' allowed students to gain pragmatic skills related to what to do and how to behave in public spaces such as at the railway station. In one of the lessons in Indore, a student had brought a platform ticket to the class. When he went to the train station to meet a relative, he did not know that anybody wanting to meet an arriving traveler on the platform had to buy a ticket to enter it. There were other examples of our lessons helping with life skills relevant to the students' experiences. Another student commented positively on the lessons on mobile phones helping him understand what the sim card was for and how it can be exchanged. This is an example of real literacies focusing on a popular object (the mobile phone) and its associated texts (e.g. settings, etc.).

An important strength of our approach was the flexibility of the curriculum and its closeness to the students' interests. As the students brought texts to the lessons, they had agency in deciding the content and direction of their classes. However, this also posed a challenge for the tutors, who had to work with the material the students brought. They had to remain flexible and responsive to the student's interests. As the curriculum was constantly evolving, it was difficult for the tutors to plan ahead, and to consider progression. There was, we might say, a degree of randomness to the way the lessons developed, even though there were sometimes obvious connections between lessons. For example, inspired by the questions on the bank application form about marital status and relatives, the girls in Deepu's class asked him to do further work on family trees and the names of extended family members in English.

Another challenge was the suitability of the texts chosen. Not all the texts brought into the classroom where equally suitable or interesting for the students. Linguistic landscape items such as public signs were useful because they were short and often contained no more than one or two important grammatical features (e.g. an imperative). Especially when a collection of such texts (the above mentioned 'curated' collection) was compiled by the tutor or the students, as we saw above (another example was a collection of public notices about parking), these collections allowed for focused and engaging lessons. But some real texts were challenging. For example, in one of the classes in Delhi, the tutor used a seat reservation form for a train journey. However, the seat reservation form is a long document containing a lot of information, significant parts of which are written in small print and use very specific language and terminology. Perhaps most importantly, not all this information is necessary or required to be read and understood in order for someone to be able to book a seat for their train journey. In his lesson report, the tutor pointed out that the seat

reservation form was not only long, but also contained complicated sentences that were difficult to understand. If he had insisted on trying to read and understand the entire document with his students, this would have taken many hours of work. This would most likely have been of little appeal to the students.

As explained, our approach relied on students' bringing texts to class. This often led to inspiring and well-received lessons, in which the students were highly engaged, as my two examples illustrate. However, the students didn't always come to class with texts, or even topics, that they wanted to work on. In the early stages of the classes, when the approach was new to the students, it was the tutors who had to find suitable materials. To was mitigated to some extent by the tutors being able to draw on ideas and materials developed during the training, which also involved a collection of sample lesson activities available on our project's shared online platform. These included texts used in the training, such as public notices about parking or safety in water, with word explanations (videos in ISL), grammar explanations and quizzes. These lessons inspired the tutors to find similar texts to work with in their own classes. However, sometimes the tutors chose texts that did not resonate with the students and their interests. For example, in the first class in Indore, after visiting the island of Goa, the Ankit brought to class a photograph of a notice that he had found on the beach. It contained a long list of 'do's and don'ts' on the beach, regulating behaviour. As Goa is a tourist destination, the notice was written entirely in English and could therefore be seen as useful material for our class. From what Ankit said in his report, the students struggled with the text, and it seems that work on this signboard was soon abandoned. Ankit didn't explain in detail why this happened, but we know from students' feedback that working with real texts and linguistic landscape items didn't always match their interests and expectations. While the sales advertisements undoubtedly captured the students' interests and were chosen by them, the notice from the beach in Goa, it can be assumed, was not close enough to the students' own life and everyday experiences to make it interesting. For example, it included references to snorkeling and scuba diving which presumably none of them had done before or would have expected to do in the near future.

There was a more fundamental challenge in using a combination of real literacies and linguistic landscape texts in our peer-to-peer project. As explained earlier, our project was designed to build on and respect students and tutors' agency. This led to a situation where the intended teaching methodology had to be reconsidered and revised in light of the students' demands. Students questioned how much work with real texts should be done. Fundamental to the real literacies methodology is a communicative approach to language and literacy teaching. We used real and linguistic landscape texts with these aims in mind. The goal was for students to be able to understand and engage with the text as appropriate, for example by knowing the difference between a price reduction of 'flat 50%' and 'up to 50%. This communicative approach de-emphasises formal skills and the explicit teaching of such skills. However, this perspective didn't necessarily match the

students' expectations and their own assessment of their learning needs. Many commented positively on what they had learned and how it had enabled them to act more independently, for example understanding what to do at the railway station or knowing how to buy an item online. However, in all our classes, the students often talked about the need to improve their grammar. Some of them left our classes because they felt there was too much discussion and not enough instruction. During my week in Indore in 2019, I found out that several of the students had left the class in the weeks before my arrival. They had only come back because they were curious to meet the visitor from England. On the first day of my stay, the tutor told me that the students weren't happy with the 'real life English' (that is what the tutors called the real literacies perspective). He and I worked together to adapt his lessons to include more explicit grammar teaching and practice. This resulted in a move away from the communicative approach we had envisaged. In conjunction with grammar teaching (for example, we developed a lesson on possessive pronouns), we included more writing activities. Syntax, I observed, was often a hurdle for the students, because the word order in English is fundamentally different from syntax in ISL. As Huebner (2016) suggests, working with LL texts can provide opportunities to develop students' meta linguistic understanding of, for example, word order. However, this is an aspect of LL work that we did initially incorporate into our approach. Developing writing activities linked to real texts had also been neglected in our training.

The fact that my paper focuses on our work with young adults in India is not just a matter of my choice. In our classes in Ghana, our real literacies approach was met with skepticism. Students expected our lessons to help them with the demands of their school curriculum and exams. In Ghana, our project partner was a high school for deaf students and our classes were held on the school's premises. Although our lessons where supplementary, voluntary, and not linked to the school curriculum, the students saw in our classes an additional opportunity to help them with their school English. The approach we had planned could not meet this expectation.

CONCLUSIONS

That a communicative approach focused on real or authentic texts did not fully meet the students' expectations should not have come as a surprise to us. Richards and Rogers (2014) note that students' backgrounds and prior experiences of language teaching or teaching more generally may make them skeptical of a pedagogy that privileges language experience and communicative activities over overt instruction.

As our project was firmly grounded in collaboration, with student and teacher agency being respected and encouraged, there was no question that our approach had to be adapted according to what students and tutors wanted. As mentioned earlier, a request for grammar was frequently expressed in all classes and it is regularly mentioned in both tutor and research assistant reports. At the same time, all the tutors frequently talked about their own difficulties in teaching grammar.

Over the course of our second and longer project, which included a one month follow-up training for the tutors, their desire to respond to the students' demand for grammar teaching and their wish to improve the way they taught grammar came to the fore. A standard grammar book for hearing students (widely used in India) was of limited use to them and their students. Instead, as I had observed and discussed with the tutors, they mostly used the internet to find grammar explanations and exercises. There was a tendency to work with examples, to illustrate a grammatical rule or pattern. However, explaining specific grammatical forms was a challenge and there was a lot of discussion between the students and the tutor about grammatical patterns and rules. For example, in one lesson I observed, the class talked at length about possessive pronouns, practicing their use and trying to understand how they are used in English. But the tutors' explanations did not seem to satisfy the students, who spent a lot of time discussing the rules with him and they made frequent mistakes.

We needed to do more and develop a way of grammar teaching that would specifically meet the needs of deaf students. We were keen to continue to link grammar teaching to real texts such as LL items or other authentic documents from the students' environment. In a subsequent capacity building project for deaf teachers, we began to develop our own approach to grammar teaching, using 'grammar games'. Grammar games are a deliberate method of teaching core grammar concepts in an engaging way, using example sentences, often from real texts and LL items, but with a language of explanation for the linguistic form that seeks to bridge the example, the students' understanding of grammar based on their first language and the often very abstract terminology of formal grammar. We have explained this approach and how it was tested in a recent book chapter (PAPEN; ZESHAN 2021).

Looking at our project and its implementation in the adult classes in India, I conclude that the two perspectives we had started with, the concepts of real literacies and linguistic landscapes, were of great use to us, but needed considerable adaptation. The real literacies approach, originally developed for adult literacy work in students' first language, had to be adapted to suit the needs of (second) language learners who, in our case, also operated with different modalities. The use of LL texts had to be adapted to suit the needs of deaf students, who used English regularly but had limited knowledge of grammar. Compared to the students in many other LL projects - university students with a more advanced knowledge of the target language - our deaf students, as they had told us, needed more teaching of the 'basics' (an expression they used). We had to respond to this need and revise our approach. When first developing the approach, we had placed perhaps too great an emphasis on real texts as the core resource for the curriculum. This created challenges. In future iterations of our work, it may be necessary not only to improve the way grammar is taught (which we have begun with the grammar games), but also to devise a methodology in which real texts (including LL items) are integrated into an overall broader and more diverse curriculum.

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