

# TEACHING POETRY IN THE SCHOOL CLASSROOM: AN INTEGRATED AND COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

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## ABSTRACT

Although revolutionary changes have taken place in Foreign Language Teaching methodology, most of our teachers, ignorant of these recent developments, still follow traditional approaches in which the teacher, like the protagonist in a 'dramatic monologue', is the only speaker and the students, being silent listeners, have practically got nothing to do other than listen to what the teacher says, no matter whether they enjoy it or not. Such approaches, predominantly teacher-centered, neither can arouse students' genuine interest in the content being taught nor do they directly involve the students in the teaching-learning process. It is, therefore, imperative to devise a language-based, communicative approach to teaching which would help students 'to see below the surface of what they read' and improve their ability in the language by offering many wide ranging activities to practise.

The present paper intends to show how an integrated and communicative approach enables a teacher in the classroom to teach more effectively by directly involving the students in the classroom activities. To illustrate this we select Charles Kingsley's poem "The Sands of Dee", included in *English For Today* which is the prescribed textbook for classes IX & X in all Secondary Schools in Bangladesh

## KEY WORDS

Communicative approach, illustrations, warmers, pre-reading, whilst-reading, post-reading, lexical items, text-properties, media transferring.

## RESUMEN

Aunque en la metodología de la Enseñanza de la Lengua Extranjera hayan tenido lugar cambios revolucionarios, la mayoría de nuestro profesorado, desconocedores de estos recientes avances, aún siguen enfoques tradicionales en

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los que el profesor, en cuanto protagonista de un 'monólogo teatral', es el único hablante y los alumnos oyen en silencio y no tienen prácticamente nada más que hacer que escuchar lo que dice el profesor, sin importar si les gusta o no. Estos enfoques, principalmente centrados en el profesor, no son capaces de despertar el genuino interés de los alumnos en los contenidos que se enseñan, ni implican directamente al alumno en el proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje. Por consiguiente es imperativo el diseño de un enfoque comunicativo de la enseñanza, basado en la lengua, que ayudara a los alumnos a 'ver por debajo de la superficie de lo que leen' y mejorara su destreza con la lengua ofreciéndoles un rango amplio de actividades de práctica.

Este trabajo trata de mostrar de qué manera con un enfoque integrado y comunicativo puede el profesor enseñar de manera más efectiva implicando directamente a los alumnos en las actividades de clase. A modo de ejemplo hemos seleccionado el poema 'The Sands of Dee' de Charles Kingsley, incluido en *English For Today*, el libro de texto exigido en los cursos IX y X de todos los centros de segunda enseñanza de Bangladesh.

#### PALABRAS CLAVE

Enfoque comunicativo, ilustraciones, calentamiento, pre-lectura, durante la lectura, tras la lectura, items léxicos, propiedades textuales, transferencia a los media.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Bien que dans la méthodologie de l'enseignement de la langue étrangère (LE) aient eu lieu des changements révolutionnaires, la plupart de nos professeurs, ignorant des avancements récents, continuent à se servir d'approches traditionnelles où le professeur, comme protagoniste d'un "monologue théâtral", est le seul à parler, et les élèves écoutent en silence et n'ont pratiquement rien d'autre chose à faire qu'à écouter ce que le professeur dit, sans que ce qu'ils écoutent leur plaise ou pas. Ces approches avec une centration surtout sur le professeur, ne sont pas capables d'éveiller l'intérêt authentique des élèves sur les contenus que l'on enseigne et ils n'impliquent pas impliquent directement les élèves dans le procédé enseignement-apprentissage. Il est donc prioritaire d'élaborer d'une d'un approche communicative de l'enseignement basée sur la langue, aidant les élèves à 'voir sous la surface de ce qu'ils lisent' et améliorant leur adresse de la langue leur offrant un large éventail d'activités pratiques.

Ce travail essaie de montrer comment avec une approche intégrée et communicative, le professeur peut enseigner d'une façon plus efficace en impliquant les élèves directement dans les activités du cours. Comme exemple, nous avons choisi le poème "The Sands of Dee" de Charles Kingsley, inclus en *English For Today*, le manuel exigé dans la IXe et Xe année dans tous les établissements de l'enseignement secondaire à Bangladesh.

#### MOTS-CLÉ

Approche communicative; images pré-lecture, pendant la lecture et après la lecture; items lexicaux; propriétés textuelles; transférence aux media.

English has been an important component on the national curriculums of the countries in the Indian sub-continent since 1835 when Macauley's *Minute*<sup>1</sup> officially established English education in India. During this long period which has passed since 1935, although many new approaches have developed for teaching English as a foreign language, unfortunately however, no significant qualitative change has taken place in the stereo-typical format of teaching and learning the subject in our country.

As practising teachers of English in Bangladesh we all have experienced that teaching foreign language in general, and foreign literature in particular, is a complex enterprise involving the risk of wasted effort. Most teachers in our English classrooms, unaware of the recent developments in ELT methodology, follow traditional teacher-centred approaches which neither arouse students' genuine interest in the subject being taught, nor do they involve the students in any meaningful classroom interaction. In traditional approaches teachers are found to fall back upon the role of imparting background information about the text/ author or delivering a 'metacritical' lecture which often results in a negative effect taking students' interest away from the text instead of making them interested in it.

In a traditional classroom, the teacher like the protagonist in a 'dramatic monologue', speaks before the students who, being silent listeners, have practically got nothing to do other than listening to what the teacher says, no matter whether they understand it or not. In such approaches, "the teaching of literature", as Moody (1983) observes, "has faltered and students have been led busily but aimlessly through 'forests of inspired literary gossips', or cajoled into rigid and doctrinaire interpretation" (p. 23).

Recent researches in ELT methodology have established that an ideal classroom situation is one in which students' maximum participation is ensured. A teacher, used to teaching through traditional approaches, would wonder "how can I involve the not-so attentive students in my class?" Boasting on his/her erudition, he/she even may go to the extent of asking the question "Do they really have anything to contribute to my scholarly and well-prepared lecture?" The answers to these ques-

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<sup>1</sup> Macauley in his *Minute* (1835) stated that from that time onward the total allocation for education in India would be utilized for English education alone. See Sharp, H. (ed.), 1920. *Selections from Educational Records*, Calcutta; Bureau of Education, Govt. of India; p. 101.

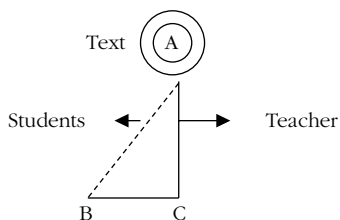
tions are certainly 'yes' if and when the teacher follows an integrated and communicative teaching approach incorporating a set of text-based, student-centred activities which, as Collie and Slater (1987) suggest "add fresh momentum into the teaching of literature by stimulating students' desire to read and encouraging their responses" (p. 8). Activities like predicting, gap-filling, creative writing, role playing, media-transferring, etc. not only establish an interface between language and literature leading to communicative exercises but also create a challenging classroom situation in which students try to put, with a competitive spirit, all their available resources into action.

The list of activities mentioned above, gives us an impression that a successful teacher in a literature classroom must combine in himself/herself the intuitive response of a practising literary critic and the analytical tools of a practical linguist. This reminds us of Roman Jakobson's important utterance made at the Indiana Conference some 40 years ago.

All of us here, definitely realize that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods, are equally fragrant anachronisms (1960, p. 377).

Jakobson's statement points to the fact that language, the medium through which messages in literary discourses are encoded certainly claims a greater and closer attention than most teachers are willing to devote. Widdowson (1975) also emphasizes a similar approach suggesting the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation. Considering the need of the present state of teaching English in Bangladesh, we can restate Ron Carter's remark that "the integration of language and literature in English classrooms is a long overdue" (1989, p. 12).

In formulating an integrated approach, the teacher, however, will be careful enough to choose only those items which not only stimulate students' interest but also reveal aspects of the text under discussion. After selecting the relevant activities, the teacher, along with the students, makes a cautious and step-by-step journey to the text-spot which the students are often reluctant to visit. In an integrated approach, the teacher is not an assessor-cum-corrector but participant-cum-guide who tries to clear aside unnecessary difficulties or false assumptions leading to a wrong approach. In an integrated approach, the role of a teacher in the classroom may be explained with the help of the following diagram.



The circle on the top marked 'A' is the text made up of layers of meanings. At a distance from 'A' is the base point 'B' where the students are situated. AC is the area from which the teacher guides and controls the students to make an eventful journey to 'A'. The dotted line BA suggests that without the teacher's guidance, students are likely to get lost on the way before they get to the text-spot. However, both the teacher and the students, through a set of activities, meet at the journey's end at 'A'. In this position the teacher, as we can see, is not imposing himself/herself between the readers and the text, but he/she is actually preparing the learners to decode the layers of meaning from 'A', the literary discourse which is meaning potential.

Approaching from the perspective of an integrated approach, the classroom activities may be divided into three categories which are (A) Pre-reading activities, (B) Whilst-reading activities and (C) Post-reading activities. Pre-reading activities may be carried out with a view to warming up students and arousing their interest in the text. Whilst-reading activities aim at developing a purposeful interaction between the text and its readers. Post-reading activities are conducted to deepen students' understanding of the text and to stimulate thought and discussion of the problems arising out of the text.

In what follows, we shall try to illustrate how an integrated approach enables a teacher to teach communicatively Charles Kingsley's poem "The Sands of Dee", included in *English for Today*, BK-VII, the prescribed textbook for classes IX and X.

#### (A) PRE-READING ACTIVITIES:

Before students read the text, it is often helpful to involve them into activities that will create the right attitude for receptivity stimulating students' responsiveness to the text and a willingness to read it. The activities require the students to employ their experience of the

world as well as their imagination and intelligence, in order to guess from text properties, what may happen in certain situations. Some properties of the text which may be used for drawing inferences are the *title, illustrations, warmers, key words, language exercises* etc.

### *Title:*

The title of a literary composition is always important, as it tends to indicate the subject and/or theme of the text. The teacher in the classroom announces that he/she is going to discuss a poem. He/She gives the title of the poem (without the text) and asks students to predict what is likely to happen in the text. Writing the title 'The sands of Dee' on the board or placing it on the OHP, the teacher may ask a range of questions to elicit students' responses. He/She can begin with relatively closed questions with choices provided and then move to more open questions that demand greater inferencing. The teacher may ask the following questions about the title:

1. Is the title a single word or a group of words?
2. Is it a phrase or a clause?
3. Is it a Noun Phrase (NP)? or a Verb Phrase (VP)? or a Prepositional Phrase (PP)? (Students are supposed to have studied different phrases. If they are not very clear about these phrases, the teacher may briefly explain the structures of different phrases and their functions in sentences).
4. What is the structure of the title phrase? (Determiner + Head Word + Qualifier, DHQ)
5. What do you understand by sands?
6. What is the difference between 'sand' and 'sands'.
7. Can you cite examples of more nouns that give us one meaning in the singular form and another meaning in the plural form? (irons; water-waters; food-foods; wood-woods;)
8. What do you understand by 'Dee'? (a river).
9. Can you name some major rivers in our country?

The teacher may ask additional general questions that will demand greater inferencing.

10. Can you predict, on the basis of the title, what is likely to happen in the poem?
11. Is the poem going to be a description of the sands of Dee?

12. Is the poem going to describe some incident that took place in the sands of Dee?

Students work either in groups, pairs or individually. When they have written down their answers, the teacher collects and discusses them without making obvious suggestions. It is important to keep note of all responses for later reference. With this activity students begin to develop an interest in and form hypotheses about the text. The teacher should try to sustain and further develop their interest by offering follow-up activities.

*Illustration:*

Having discussed the title, the teacher may present an illustration that presents a pictorial view of the text under discussion. An illustration can provide important clues for predicting the content of the topic of the text. Many texts have front-cover illustrations, some graded selections accompany every text with a picture. If an illustrated text is not available, the teacher may get an artist to prepare an illustration: An illustration of the text "The Sands of Dee" should show a river in the rising tide flowing from the adjacent sea. Close to its mouth, the river has a sandy estuary and grassy island where cattle are grazing. In the afternoon, wrapped up in rolling mist, the damp wind is blowing violently and the rising tide, in the form of high waves, creeps up inundating the entire sandy beaches. In the river the fishermen have spread their nets supported by stakes from which a tress of golden hair is floating.

After distributing the copies of the illustration, the teacher asks the students to derive as much information as possible about the setting of the poem by closely examining the details. While students study the illustration, the teacher asks the following questions with alternative choices provided to ensure students' ready involvement in the classroom discussion.

1. Is the river flowing from the sea or towards the sea?
2. Is the river in the high tide or in the low tide?
3. Is the beach very close to the river or is it far away from the river?
4. Is the weather calm and quiet or stormy and violent?
5. Is the grassy island empty or are there cattle grazing in it?

6. Are the waves receding or are they going to inundate the sandy breaches?

The teacher can also present the following general questions for open discussion which enable the students to express their feelings. Students should be encouraged to discuss in groups or pairs so that they can arrive at some tentative conclusions:

1. What are stakes and what are they used for?
2. What does the floating tress of golden hair suggest to you?
3. Try to find out as many details as possible of the setting of the poem from the illustration.

These questions, prompting further involvement and responses, bring students one step closer to the text and encourage them to be more specific about the theme.

#### *Warmers:*

Pre-reading activities can also be carried out with the help of some one-line warmers picked up from the text or chosen from maxims, proverbs and quotations that are closely related to some aspect of the content and theme. Warmers facilitate open discussion and help elicit predictions of what the text is going to be about. They encourage a response to the theme and prompt a prior personal involvement with the topic represented in the text. The teacher, choosing some closely related warmers, distributes them to students and asks them to express the idea contained in them. In order to highlight the topic of the text “The Sands of Dee”, the teacher might choose the following one-liners:

- i) River of Dart, O river of Dart  
Every year thou claimest a heart
- ii) People strive against the stream in vain.
- iii) Rivers sweep away every thing.
- iv) Hungry waves swallow.
- v) The sea is a gluttonous monster
- vi) The sea has cruel, hungry foam.

Students discuss in pairs or groups and put down, in brief, what they make out of the one-liners. The warmers provide discussions on a more concentrated level about the possible meaning of the text.



Another way of presenting the warmers is to devise a true-false exercise in which students have the freedom to choose the alternative they think more appropriate. The true-false exercise may be presented thus:

<i>Tick (✓) the right choice</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>False</i>
Rivers sweep everything		
Hungry waves swallow		
The sea is gluttonous monster		
The sea has cruel hungry foam		

This system is useful with statements for which both choices hold good in different situations. For example, *The sea is a gluttonous monster*, and *The sea has cruel hungry foam* may be either true or false depending on the context and the learner's attitude. Students who hold that the sayings are false may argue that 'some seas are very calm and quiet and rivers are more useful than harmful'. Such differences in response may provoke interesting debates among the students.

As the above warmers tend to point to the harmful aspect of sea, students are likely to form the impression that the poem is going to describe a stormy sea which swallowed some innocent individual.

### *Key Words and Phrases:*

Sometimes the text provides clues for predicting its theme or content through the vocabulary used. It is, therefore, rewarding to pay particular attention to the structure, organization, selection and collocation of lexical items in a literary text. The words and collocated units that appear in the form of key words, together, through a semantic link, help readers predict what the atmosphere of the world inside the text is going to be like. The teacher, presenting a list of particular lexical items from the text, can ask students to create a mental picture of the fictional world of the text from the connotative implications of the listed lexical items. For the poem "The Sands of Dee" the teacher can present the following list of carefully selected words, phrases and expressions.

Wild ...wind	floating hair
Wind ... dank with foam	drowned maiden's hair
all alone	the rolling foam
tide crept up along the sand	the cruel crawling foam

rolling mist  
never home came she

the cruel hungry foam  
grave beside the sea

Students discuss in groups or pairs the semantic implications of the words and try to reconstruct the fictional world in the text. The teacher should prompt the following questions and guide the students to find answers to them by supplementing and extending the points as necessary.

1. What impression of the wind do you get from the following words and phrases?

Wild...wind

Wind...dank with foam

rolling mist

Is the wind normal and gentle or is it wild and stormy?

Is the weather fair and cool or is it misty and rough?

2. What idea of the setting do you gather from the following words and phrases?

tide crept up along the sand

the rolling foam

the cruel crawling foam

grave beside the sea.

Is the setting likely to be a hilly area or a sandy beach?

Is it already under water or going to be submerged by the cruel crawling foam?

Why is the crawling foam cruel?

3. What do the following phrases suggest?

never home came she

floating hair

drowned maiden's hair

grave beside the sea

What happened to the maiden?

Was she drowned?

Was her hair floating in the river?

Was she buried in the grave beside the sea?

4. Does the above list of words and phrases suggest
  - (a) a positive atmosphere or
  - (b) negative atmosphere?

5. What do you think the poem is going to be about?  
 Is it just going to be a description of a sandy beach?  
 Does it suggest that the cruel hungry foam swallowed the maiden whose hair was floating on the sea?

Predicting activities on the basis of the key words can be an important stage in sensitizing students as they can create an awareness of the content and give an impression of the atmosphere of the poem's fictional world.

The activities discussed so far are designed to elicit predictions of what is going to happen. However, they are not intended to deal with the actual situation in the text. These activities heighten students' involvement with the text and stimulate their interest in reading it. Eliciting responses, they increase students' involvement because of the natural desire of seeing their expectations fulfilled or contravened. At this stage the teacher may expose the actual text to the class and engage the students in whilst-reading activities, while they, with a deep sense of involvement, eagerly wait to see to what extent their predictions are true. (The text is given in the Appendix-1)

#### (B) WHILST-READING ACTIVITIES

Having performed a set of pre-reading activities learners have brought themselves very close to the text they are going to read soon. The whilst reading activities, therefore, are designed with a view to making the text more accessible to the students by developing a purposeful interaction between the text and its readers. Some whilst-reading activities are:

- i) Listening to a good reading of the text;
- ii) Reading the text;
- iii) Language exercises, and
- iv) Checking against predictions made about the text in the pre-reading activities.

Students often enjoy listening to a text either on a tape or when it is being read out loudly by the teacher in the classroom. It is, therefore, better if the students can first listen to the text without having to read it. Listening to a good reading is helpful because it gives the students a sense of the whole. It also helps them achieve a dramatic effect created by sounds and intonations. If the text is long, the teacher can

read out some of its interesting sections which not only readily engages students' attention but also encourages them to read the whole text.

It is now time for the students to read the text either individually or in pairs or groups. After reading it once or twice, they prepare a list of new words and phrases which is likely to include the following:

- cattle (l.2) - (cows and bulls)
- dark with foam (l.5) - (wet with water drops)
- tide (l-7) - (the flow of water in a river)
- crept up (l.7) - (came rolling)
- rolling (l.9) - (moving)
- weed (l.12) - (sea plant)
- golden hair (l.13) - (English girls have golden hair)
- drowned (l.18) - (died from drowning)
- crawling (l.19) - moving along the ground
- grave - (burial place)

The teacher helps the students to find the meanings of the listed words as they are used in the text.

Reading the poem, students come to know that the weather was rough and misty, the wind was wild, and the river was in the high tide. In such fowl weather Mary, a young girl, went all alone to call the cattle home across the sands of Dee. The hungry waves crawled up, the beach went under water and Mary was drowned. The fishermen discovered Mary's dead body floating from the stakes of their nets in the river. They brought it to the shore and buried it in a grave beside the sea. Mary's tragic death left a deep impression on the minds of the boatmen who, in their imagination, still hear her call the cattle home.

From their reading of the text, students are glad to see that they formed some clear ideas about the poem before actually going through it. Most of their predictions made at the pre-reading stage, come true in the actual situation of the poem dealing with a stormy sea which swallowed the innocent girl who went to call the cattle home.

At this stage it may be a rewarding exercise if the teacher, distributing the text of the Bengali poem called "*Meghnay Ban*" (which is based on 'The Sands of Dee'), asks them to make a comparative study of the two poems to find out their similarities and differences (The poem is given in Appendix-2).

Reading the text may be viewed as a kind of surface interaction which, through further activities at the post-reading stage, will lead to a deeper understanding and a fuller appreciation of the text.

## (C) POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Post-reading activities are carried out with a view to creating an appropriate situation for the learners to express their reactions to reading the text. The principal aims of these activities are:

- (i) to deepen students' understanding of the text;
- (ii) to generate interest in the creative use of language; and
- (iii) to provide opportunities leading to further interaction.

On the basis of the aims and objectives, post-reading activities may be divided into several sub-categories which are:

- (i) comprehension questions;
- (ii) language exercises; and
- (iii) creative activities

We shall now try to work out these activities with reference to our text under discussion.

*Comprehension Questions*

These questions enable the teacher to examine what the students have made out of the text. The teacher can ask the following short questions based on minor details about the setting, plot, character, event, situations, subject-matter etc. They will lead to the proper understanding of the text correcting false assumptions, if any.

- (i) Where is the Dee?
- (ii) Who is Mary?
- (iii) Who asked her to go and call the cattle home?
- (iv) Is Mary a maiden or a woman? Is there any mention of her age in the text? If not, how do you know that she is a maiden?
- (v) Where did Mary go to call the cattle home? Did she go alone?
- (vi) How was the weather then?
- (vii) Was the river in the high tide?
- (viii) Was the wind wild?
- (ix) What is a Salmon?
- (x) What happened to Mary?
- (xi) What did the fishermen take Mary's hair for?
- (xii) Who found her dead body and where?

- (xiii) Who brought the dead body to the shore?
- (xiv) What did they do with the dead body?
- (xv) Why was the foam called cruel and hungry?
- (xvi) What do the boatmen still hear across the sands of Dee?

Students answer the questions either orally or in writing and the teacher corrects them pointing out their mistakes.

### *Studying Text Properties*

Each text has some important properties which need to be studied seriously for a better understanding of the text. The present text deals with a past incident narrated mainly in the past tense. The questions that arise at this stage are:

- 1) Who narrates the event of the text?
- 2) Do you come across more than one speaker in the text?
- 3) If so, who are they?
- 4) Why does the narrative shift from the past tense to the present tense in the concluding lines of the poem?

Students, on a careful rereading, realize that it is the poetic persona who mainly narrates the event. But instead of tiding the whole story in the third person, he tactfully weaves the speeches of other persons in the fabric of the text.

Students will find that the poetic persona begins the poem with a direct command addressed to Mary by someone, not clearly identified. Thus the first stanza contains the addresser's direct speech in the present tense put within the inverted commas. The addresser, in the given situation of the poem, may be Mary's mother/father or master who owns the cattle.

Quoting the addresser's words in the direct speech, the persona sets out to narrate the atmosphere in which Mary was asked to call the cattle home. He continues his narration upto line 11 and then between lines 12 and 17 he inserts what the salmon fishers guessed at the strange sight of the floating flock of golden hair. The guesses in the direct speech and in the present tense enable the readers to undertake an imaginary flight from 'here and now' to 'there and then' --- the actual spot and time of the event.

From line 17 the persona again continues spinning the story with his own words in the past tense but finishes the text with a sudden shift to the present tense thus:

“But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home  
Across the sands of Dee”

The reason for switching over to the present tense from the past is not hard to find. The tragic death of Mary cast a deep impression in the minds of the people around the sands of Dee. The boatmen who used to hear her call the cattle home find it difficult to forget her memories and even today, in their imagination, they seem to hear her call the cattle home. Thus the shift from the past to the present tends to establish a link between the past when the event occurred and the present when its impact is still being felt.

### *Language Exercises*

The teacher can introduce a great variety of language exercises in order to advance students' language skills. These exercises may be either element-based, focusing on particular areas of language or skill-based, concentrating on any of the four skills of language. The language activities that may be carried out at this stage with the text under discussion are:

- i) giving antonyms of the selected words and phrases;
- ii) preparing a different version of the text by changing the voices;
- iii) converting the direct speeches into the indirect ones;
- iv) studying structural peculiarities of the text.

#### a) Giving Antonyms

In order to increase the students' word power, the teacher can select the following words from the text and then ask them to give their antonyms:

Wild ---- (gentle)  
 dark ---- (dry)  
 rolling ---- (fixed)  
 floating ---- (sinking)  
 Cruel ---- (kind)  
 Hungry ---- (full)

## b) Changing the voices

Selecting the following lines in the active voice from the text, the teacher engages the students to convert the sentences into the passive voice:

- i) Call the cattle home;
- ii) The rolling mist came and hid the land;
- iii) They rowed her across the rolling foam;
- iv) Still the boatmen hear her voice.

An alternative way would be to ask the students to write a substance of the poem using the verbs in the passive voice when and where possible. (Students may start in this way - Mary was asked by somebody to call the cattle home...)

## c) Changing the form of Narration

There are two instances of direct speeches in the text which are:

- i) "O Mary, go and call the cattle home  
And call the cattle home  
And call the cattle home  
Across the sands of Dee !" and
- ii) "Oh ! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair -  
A trees of golden hair,  
A drowned maiden's hair  
Above the nets at sea?  
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair,  
Among the stakes of Dee"?

The teachers asks the students to change them into indirect speech.

## d) Studying Structural Peculiarities

Structural peculiarities also known as '*foregroundings*' (Halliday, 1973) or 'motivated deviations' aim at creating the desired effect. The most significant structural peculiarity of the text, is the repetition of phrases with slight variations. Such repetitions which are intended to intensify the meaning conveyed in them are:

- i) ..... and call the cattle home,  
And call the cattle home,  
And call the cattle home



- ii) ..... along the sand  
And round and round the sand,
- iii) ..... floating hair -  
A tress of golden hair  
A drowned maiden's hair.
- iv) ..... cross the rolling foam  
The cruel crawling foam  
The cruel hungry foam.

### *Inverted Structure*

Another structural peculiarity is the inverted structure. In the poem all but two sentences conform to the normal Subject + Verb + Complement + Modifier (SVC M) pattern. The two deviant structures

- i) And all alone went she (l-6)
- and ii) And never home came she (l-11)

follow the inverted structure M (Modifier) + V (Verb) + S (Subject) in which the 'how' and 'when' are more emphasized than the action itself.

### *Creative Activities*

After comprehension questions and language exercises the teacher may introduce the class to a whole range of creative activities designed to enhance students' understanding and appreciation and to improve their expressive and receptive skills. Some of these activities which can be worked out with the text under discussion are:

- (i) Rewriting Exercises, (ii) Media Transferring and (iii) Role-playing

#### a) Rewriting Exercises

Rewriting activities may be 'free or 'controlled'. In the former, students enjoy the freedom of expressing, in their own words, what they have made out of the text. In controlled or guided rewriting exercises students, however, are provided with the guidelines to be followed. Students may be asked to summarise the poem in a fixed number of words, or to rewrite the text with an ending different from the one in the original.

## b) Media Transferring

Media transferring or text-transformation is a challenging creative exercise which enables students to express an imaginative experience through various media. The teacher can ask the students to write a film script or to prepare a front-cover illustration based on the poem.

## c) Role-playing

In these activities students are to assume different roles as dictated by the situations in the text. Performing such roles help students gain self-confidence and prepare themselves to face situations in practical life. Students can easily dramatise the poem with little guidance and encouragement from the teacher. In so doing, one student can play the role of the poetic persona who narrates the event, another student acts as the addresser who asks Mary to go and call the cattle home and one or two students place themselves in the position of the salmon fishers who exclaimed with wonder seeing the floating flock of golden heir.

## CONCLUSION

Having completed the sets of pre-, while- and post-reading activities, students have gained a fuller understanding of the text and have linguistically and conceptually prepared themselves to study it for possible interpretation and evaluation. They have practised how to make predictions and check them against the actual happening in the text, studied how to deduce meaning and form a semantic chain from the key words, examined how language is used to describe a setting and create desired effects, analysed how to assess them, and also worked out ways of transferring the text and reconstructing its specific and literal meaning. Thus, with awakened language sensitivity and improved literary insight, they have gained a competence to look at a literary text as a work of creative self-expression instilled with aesthetic intent.

## APPENDIX-1

'O' Mary, go and call the cattle home  
And call the cattle home,

And call the cattle home,  
Across the sands of Dee !'

5 The western wind was wild and dank with foam  
And all alone went she  
The western tide crept up along the sand.  
And round and round the sand,  
As far as eye could see.

10 The rolling mist came down and hit the land  
And never home came she.

'Oh, is it weed, or fish, or floating hair -  
A tress of golden hair,  
A drowned maiden's hair,

15 Above the nets at sea?  
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair,  
Among the stakes of Dee'.

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,  
The cruel crawling foam,  
20 The cruel hungry foam,  
To her grave beside the sea.

But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home  
Across the sands of Dee.

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