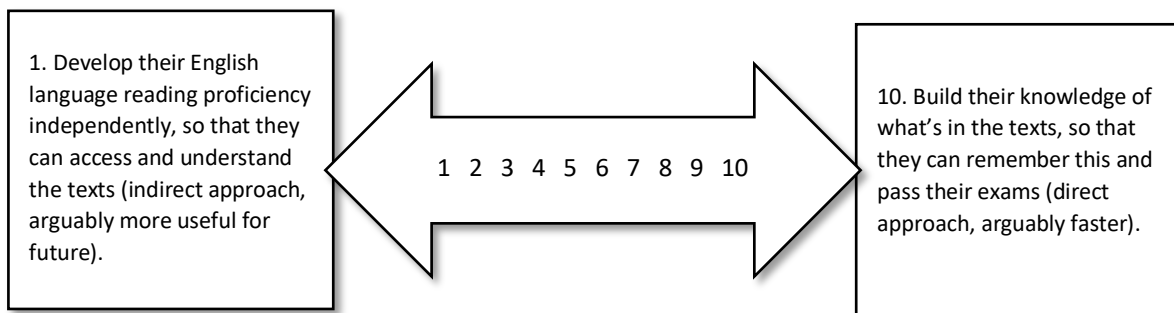


The challenge of over-ambitious curricula and 'set texts' in exams in India

For many learners, the 'lessons' (i.e. prose and poetry texts) across a range of state and national curricula in India are far beyond their receptive skills proficiency. But they are tested on these texts (esp. Gr. 10/12), partly on their knowledge of the content. Thus, many Indian teachers face this question:

How do I help them to understand challenging texts (and pass the tests)?

Two theoretical positions can be identified along a cline:

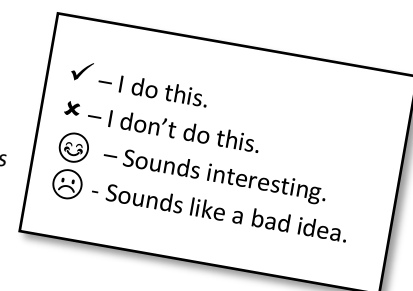


Where is your teaching on this cline, and why? Be honest!

E.g. If you choose '5' as your position (in the middle of the cline), that would represent an approach that believes in both of these, and so might combine techniques from both ends of the cline. If you chose 8, you mainly believe primarily in building their 'text knowledge', but may also incorporate a few ideas that help to develop independent reading skills.

Example techniques

Note: T = teacher; SS = students; collaborative(ly) means working in pairs or groups; L1 means the dominant local community language and/or the medium of instruction of the class.



A. Understanding the text

1. T translates (sections of) the text, or summarises in L1.
2. T paraphrases/simplifies (sections of) the text in English.
3. T asks questions to check understanding of the text (in English and/or L1).
4. SS write answers to comprehension questions on the text (individually or collaboratively).
5. SS translate or summarise (sections of) the text.
6. SS ask each other questions about (sections of) the text (in English and/or L1).
7. Others:

B. Learning the vocabulary

1. While reading through the text, T translates key words for SS to note down.
2. T pre-teaches vocabulary before reading the text. SS record in notebooks in L1.
3. T assigns vocabulary learning tasks for homework.
4. T tests SS on past vocabulary they have studied.
5. SS test each other on past vocabulary they have studied.
6. Others:

C. Developing independent reading skills

1. T reads the text while SS listen and follow in books.
2. T nominates SS to stand and read aloud sections of the text.
3. T gets SS to read quietly, working in pairs or bench groups.
4. T instructs SS to read the text individually and silently.
5. T gives SS tasks relating to the text to work on (e.g. write a summary, scanning, etc).
6. T provides supplementary reading practice (e.g. reading for pleasure).
7. Others:

D. Ensuring learners have notes they can understand and use for revision

1. T gets SS to annotate textbook text.
2. T gets SS to create bilingual vocabulary lists.
3. T gets SS to take notes about content/figures of speech, etc.
4. T gets SS to buy bilingual study guides/digests.
5. T conducts regular revision of prior texts throughout year.
6. T gives summary notes on each text (in English and/or L1).
7. Others: