

## ELTAI Report 2020-2021

When the pandemic disrupted the rhythm of our life, ELTAI's annual conference 2020 was no exception. We were all set to hold it in June last year, but we were destined to do something vastly different. What was supposedly a three-day conference paved way for 76 webinars as on date drawing resource persons and attendees globally for the members' professional enrichment. The Novel Corona19 Virus spread generated a novel way of holding CPD programmes in the form of webinars – we branded them as the Sunday Tea-time Webinars, scheduling them between 4.30 and 5.30 pm (Indian Standard Time) with some flexibility when warranted.

### Weekly Webinars

The first Sunday webinar of a month primarily targets school teachers, focusing on classroom techniques through the workshop mode. The second focuses on teachers teaching at the tertiary level as well as at lower levels, with theoretical inputs of recent developments in ELT. The third addresses the cognitive and life skills of tertiary level students across disciplines, while the fourth is meant to discuss topics related to literary studies, targeting literature lovers besides teachers and literature scholars. The attendees range from 300 to 600, once touching 1650, and their sustained positive feedback has given us the impetus to continue the series. Prof. Mohanraj's commitment and untiring efforts in this regard need a special mention. We also acknowledge Prof. Irom Gambhir Singh's efforts in attracting participants from neighbouring countries from the East for the webinars.

### Teachers' Day Celebration 2020

Yet another novelty that the Novel Corona19

Virus pandemic gave birth to was the manner in which we commemorated the Teachers' Day of 2020. ELTAI organised a virtual Teachers' Day Celebration by hosting inspiring talks and conducting a medley of contests for three days, from 3rd to 5th September, 2020. Ten online contests, targeting three groups of participants, were conducted:

- School students: (1) Memes; (2) Doodles & Mini-sagas; and (3) Reflections on a Book.
- College students: (4) Twitterature; (5) E-Posters; (6) Quiz; and (7) Poetry Slam.
- Teachers: (8) Blogging; (9) PowerPoint Presentations; and (10) Podcasts.

Besides cash prizes for the winners, all the participants were given certificate of appreciation for their efforts.

### Reading Movement and Reading Clubs

It is certainly a matter of grave concern that the 'visual' generation of today has strayed away from 'the culture of reading' – a skill recognised as the mother of all skills. Even when they happen to read, they seem to be mostly flipping through non-serious texts. If the reading habit is not developed during their school/college days, the possibility of cultivating it ever in one's lifetime is remote. Therefore, ELTAI has launched the Reading Movement through Reading Clubs, which have the following goals:

- To create a love for reading among students and enable them to become better, lifelong readers;
- To enable them to reflect on and discuss what they read;

- To familiarise them with different text types (genres) and facilitate them to identify appropriate reading strategies; and
- To employ both synchronous (both virtual and physical meetings) and asynchronous modes – Web tools, WhatsApp, Facebook, Blogs, Reading Logs, MOOCs (audios, videos, quotes, blurbs, reviews, and so on) to sustain their interests.

The Reading Club, to a large extent, is learner-driven and learner-managed, under the guidance of faculty members as mentors. The clubs are functionally interest-specific, area-specific, and gender-specific.

### **FDP on Reading**

ELTAI, for the first time, conducted an eight-day Faculty Development Programme on ‘Reading: Back to Basics’ in August 2021 for college teachers. About 200 teachers from different parts of the country participated and 35 resource persons dealt with varied topics, such as, reading micro and macro skills, intensive and extensive reading, reading strategies, technology-enabled reading, and rapid reading versus slow reading, to mention only a few, and many were even surprised that there are so many aspects to reading but have remained unnoticed.

A two-day Reading Enrichment Programme for secondary school teachers, focusing on the pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading phases, was organised at the beginning of this month. Another programme is planned for primary school teachers to deal the concept of ‘learn to read’ as against ‘read to learn’ appropriate to the age group. The association is deeply engaged in continuous professional development of teachers at different levels catering to their needs as against

the stereotypical practice of one-size-fits-all.

### **Journals**

Our print journal, *Journal of English Language Teaching*, is now included in the UGC-CARE list and efforts are on for indexing it in other global bodies such as Scopus and MLA; eventually, the other three online journals, viz., *Journal of Technology for ELT*, *The ELT Practitioner*, and *Journal of Teaching and Research in English Literature*, also will get such recognition, thanks to the persistent efforts of Dr. Ramani and Dr. Neeru Tanden.

### **Funded Projects**

ELTAI was awarded the Hornby Trust Teacher Association Projects three times in the past and once again this year we have been awarded a grant for our project on ‘Shaping and nurturing future teachers of English at the secondary level of education’, to be implemented in 2022. Rather than dealing only with practising teachers through in-service training, which is the usual practice, we have decided to focus instead on the future teachers who are undergoing their training programme leading to their degree in education. Shaping and nurturing them, we hope, could lead to a real transformative ecosystem of pedagogical practices.

Another project for which ELTAI has been chosen this year is the IATEFL-funded project on ‘Partnered Remote Language Improvement’ of English teachers’ classroom English, especially for teachers in rural and remote areas. We are genuinely happy to receive it as our association’s thrust has always been reaching out to the resource-less contexts. More than anyone else, they are the ones who need and are interested in such programmes.

## **Chapters**

We now have 63 chapters strong, spreading across the country, and outside. The latest one to join is the Jammu Chapter with Dr. Vandana Sharma as its convener. Two new initiatives were undertaken: one is the Institutional membership and the first one to launch was GTN Arts College at Dindigul and we look forward to many more colleges to follow suit. The second is an exclusive chapter for the Indian English Teachers Teaching Abroad and it was initiated by Dr. Justin James based in Oman. We expect it to swell as there are thousands of them teaching abroad including the so called native-speaking countries but they need to be NRIs to join us.

## **The Tasks Ahead for ELTAI**

We may have to misquote the famous lines from Coleridge's poem, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' – "Water, water, everywhere/nor any drop to drink" – and exclaim 'English, English everywhere, but elusive to everyone.'" English arrived on our shores, thanks to the East India Company more than 400 years ago, we are now immersed in English all around us, all the time. But credible studies point out that only

about two per cent of Indians have native-like fluency after all these years, which are inversely proportional to the time and resources invested. We have realized, rather too late, that transplantations or cloning of the western approaches and methods yield only limited success, and the teaching-learning of English has become nightmarish.

Not taking cognizance of this any longer can only cause generations of learners never forgiving us for leading them along a ruinous pathway. That's the reason why the conference hinges on the theme of 'ELT in India: New Needs, New Demands, New Trends'; the repetition of the word 'New' emphasizes the urgency to strive towards encouraging and developing indigenous approaches and methods for teaching English at various levels –primary, secondary, and tertiary. It is time for re-discovering our own good practices, call it indigenous or homegrown. The next time we meet, we hope, our focus will have shifted towards a transformative teaching-learning ecosystem for learning English which would benefit millions.

K. Elango, Secretary, ELTAI