

Report on the first workshop of the project *Prospects for English Studies*, with the workshop theme “Questions of Curriculum, Pedagogy, and the Market”

JNU, Delhi, 5-6 April 2012

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There are two parts to this report. The first gives a panel-by-panel account of proceedings, emphasizing the main points raised in each. In each panel a number of participants were invited to make brief presentations, these were then discussed, and at the end a summary of the discussion as a whole was given by a discussant. In the panel-by-panel account the main interventions, whether in the brief presentations or in the discussions that followed, are marked with the initials of the person who opened up the issue in the first instance – however, each issue was responded to by most participants.

The second part identifies issues that arose repeatedly in the workshop. These should be discussed and explored further.

PART 1: PANEL-BY-PANEL ACCOUNT

Panel 1: English Studies in the XIth and XIIth Plans: The Institutional and Policy Context

Main contributors: Harish Trivedi (HT), Saugata Bhaduri (SB), Richard Allen (RA), Mukesh Ranjan (MR), Supriya Chaudhuri (SupC), Debanjan Chakrabarti (DC), GJV Prasad (GJV)

HT prefaced the session by observing that he felt the questions posed in the project are British questions addressed to the Indian situation, and that the project is not so much of humanities as sociology. He could discern no significant connection between the XI and XII plans and the condition of the discipline. He observed that in Delhi University there has been little impetus for change since the curriculum revision of the late 1990s which had the effect of opening it up – to make it less a study of British literature and more of Indian and world literature, as well as inclusive of popular cultural texts and texts in other media. There was no sense now of an intellectual manifesto for change, only a desire for more posts and more money. He doubted whether English studies (which come with a conventional literary emphasis) are indeed popular in India, and suspected that it is not as message but as medium that the discipline is relevant (i.e. as a way of learning a language which helps career prospects and material aspirations). English studies in India have borne the aspirations of the middle class or elites and sponsored inequality.

MR and SB offered somewhat differently nuanced accounts of the relevance of the plans to the discipline. SB noted that the published XIth national education plan, with the Prime Minister’s preface, gave an optimistic account of developments by citing

growing budget allocation to education (with a significant increase for HE), growing enrolment, and infrastructural investment (including a plan to establish 30 new central universities). It also specifically mentioned “promotion and development of English and foreign languages”. However the entire emphasis of the report was on English in the primary/secondary school context, and was understood entirely in terms of its vocational utility as a language. The plan was unlikely to make a significant difference to English studies as currently pursued in Indian HE. The focus was on the development of skills in HE and on expansion in Engineering and Medicine. MR felt that English studies are going from strength to strength in India. He noted that in the XIIth plan the development of 22 languages, including English, was mentioned; that there had been further increase in HE budget allocation; and that the emphasis on education for employment was to the advantage of English studies, especially for language studies (because English is an asset from this perspective) but also generally. The focus then is on enhancing pedagogy which will increase skills in language and develop an international competency. He cited recent figures of research project funding in the Humanities at his university, Jamia, and was hopeful of future developments. MR also noted the possibility that the presence of a highly skilled HE sector together with low costs could make India a hub for international students.

SupC observed that the factors responsible for the good health of English studies in India has little to do with the manner in which the discipline is currently constituted (with its emphasis on literature), and more to do with the desire for competence in the English language which has benefitted English studies accidentally. The emphasis on literature in the discipline means that academics are approaching a “future towards which our back is turned”. SupC argued that it was the responsibility of the English studies community to recognise the demands of the government, to understand its values and work with this. She gave a brief overview of the current education context, touching particularly on the Right to Education Act of 2009, and the provisions for compulsory education in English at schools – though the latter are unevenly accessed. She recalled previous policy discussions at the UGC, when a panel was appointed in the early 1990s to make recommendations for Western and foreign language education. No policy was enacted on its recommendations but its deliberations were possibly valuable and could be considered further under changing circumstances. DC agreed with SupC’s observations, and re-emphasized the short-sightedness of focusing English studies exclusively on literature and being dismissive of language teaching. He gave further details of recent and relevant policy developments in addition to the Right to Education Act, drawing attention to the 2005 National Curriculum Framework and the recent National Vocational Education and Qualifications Framework (NVEQF). DC also emphasized the very significant ground-level aspiration to English language competence, especially among traditionally deprived constituencies such as Dalits. He commented on the gap between the English language which students experienced in English studies and the English language which they encountered in work.

RA spoke of the British situation and noted that several of the issues raised had been debated in the UK, especially in relation to increased access to HE and financial arrangements. The British experience, he felt, had shown that increase in funding often came with an increased desire for control – and that he was able to discern echoes of the kind of language that appeared in British education policy documents in the Indian ones. There were three thrusts in the British education policy environment that were highlighted in relation to the Humanities generally and English studies particularly: first, the creation of internal markets within Faculties and between universities so that students have to be competed for internally; second, the funding arrangements for research and teaching have gradually bifurcated, whereby research is now funded predominantly by external grants (ultimately, the idea is that teaching would pay for itself, and so would research); and third, that the notion of competitive self-sustenance of research and teaching has meant the establishment of accounting and performance gauges and demands for transparency.

GJV summed up the current debate in the discipline as being between literacy and literature, and confirmed, as did HT, that English language teaching has conventionally been looked down upon and has remained under-resourced in most Indian universities.

Panel 2: Students and Teachers: Common or Competing Aims

Main contributors: Divya Dwivedi (DD), Vikas Jain (VJ), Sumitra Thoidingjam (ST), Subarno Chattarji (SubC), Harriet Raghunathan (HR)

With her experience as research scholar and teaching assistant at Delhi IIT in mind, DD felt that students generally have a functional approach to the discipline – to achieve better grades and thus better their employment prospects. This powerful motivation to student engagement with English studies is however disregarded in universities, as she found while teaching at Delhi University. There is little systematic information on student attitudes and expectations, and teachers feel concerned about the perceived disconnection between what they teach and what students want. She noted the poor level of English proficiency which students enrolling in universities often suffer from (so that IIT has to make provision for remedial English classes), while the programmes offered are premised on a fairly high level of language proficiency. However, she felt that English studies seem in general to deliver what students seek, and seems to be “doing something right, but we don’t know what it is”. DD also noted the predominance of women students in English studies. Substantially similar points were made by ST about student expectations in view of her varied experience of being a student in Manipur and Delhi and teacher in DU and Jamia. Further, she noted the difference between undergraduate and graduate levels in English proficiency and academic interests -- a streamlining takes place with progression through degrees. ST also commented on the significantly higher proportion of women among students of English, and the somewhat distinct gender attitudes to engaging with the discipline (including in

functional terms). She observed that there were no systematic arrangements for teacher assessments or teaching quality assurance in institutions she has experience of.

VJ and HR based their observations on questionnaire-based surveys that they had conducted in their classrooms. VJ's questionnaire was administered to 40 students in 3 courses (Politics students with a qualifying paper in English, Political Science and Cultural Studies with a similar paper, and Business English), and sought information on 5 points: level of education of family; family income status; level of school education; expectations of the university English course; whether those expectations were being met. He felt unable to collate the diverse responses to obtain a meaningful picture. In a general way, he confirmed that students are not interested in literature but in improving their language skills. VJ also conjectured that the demands of the teaching of skills which students sought (alongside other aims) did not match the training most teachers get through MPhil or PhD work. He was concerned that a significant number of students were unable to access texts because their schooling in English had been inadequate, and concluded that the problems facing HE English studies need to be addressed at the school level. HR's questionnaire was addressed to 2 groups of JMC students of English Honours and Pass, and posed primarily three questions: whether they envisage doing a higher or further degree and in what field; whether they wish or intend to work and in what sector; whether the English course was useful/fun in view of their responses to the above. A few students wished for more emphasis on language skills, but most were satisfied with their literature course. A fuller survey of Honours students showed a strongly favourable response to the challenge and wide-ranging nature of English studies, which made them critically aware of many factors in culture and society.

SubC observed, with DU in mind, that university programmes in English are not responsive to students' needs and demands. This is due mainly, he argued, to the centralized governance structure that operates in the university, which is increasingly following policies of marketizing education. To a significant extent this has to do with the distance between Faculties and colleges of DU, and the top down structure that is maintained at the expense of pedagogic autonomy in colleges. The recent imposition of semesterization in DU, without allowing for such autonomy and with inadequate investment to make it work, was cited as a case in point. A larger than institutional concern with a market-oriented view in Indian HE was articulated by pointing to the emergence of private HE providers and by citing research on promoting English as a commodity. SubC argued that a more contextualised teaching of English studies would be valuable in overcoming the current disaffection with current methods of teaching. RMP observed that the IIT situation was instructive in that teachers had greater scope for autonomy there.

The paucity of much school education in English and the growing divide between what schools deliver in this regard and what is expected in HE generated considerable discussion.

Panel 3: Past, Present and Future Changes in Curriculum and Pedagogy in English Literature and English Language

Main contributors: Anuradha Ghosh (AG), GJV Prasad (GJV), Poonam Trivedi (PT), Mukti Sanyal (MS), Richard Allen (RA), Suman Gupta (SG), Supriya Chaudhuri (SupC), Harish Trivedi (HT), Makarand Paranjape (MP), Debanjan Chakrabarti (DC), Saugata Bhaduri (SB)

AG picked up on the slippage between school and HE education in English by pointing to a “paradox of policy”. On the one hand, to a very large extent English is compulsorily the medium of instruction in HE. On the other hand, at the school level there is a considerably lower emphasis on English as medium of instruction, and it is not so in various categories of schools. She felt that many of the contradictions that arise in HE English studies, especially in the conflict between the demand for English literacy and emphasis on English literature, could be traced to this paradox. AG also noted several doubtful preconceptions at work in relation to English: for instance, that better skills in English will enhance technological development which creates employment, whereas there is research to suggest that technological development hasn’t created but lost jobs. She felt it would be suicidal for ELT to be separated from English literature in Indian HE.

RA wondered whether an “either-or” approach to the issue of English literacy and literature could be replaced by a “both-and” approach (i.e. thinking about how both could work together, thus capitalizing on both for a more productive way forward). SG suggested that the “either-or” approach needs to be kept under sceptical review, since the kind of compulsory compromise suggested by “both-and” may or may not be useful and might narrow the discussion unnecessarily.

GJV reported briefly on the perspective offered from JNU, which is distinctive both in being a post-graduate university and in structuring its offering of English programmes with language studies in the first instance. He charted the shift towards more literary content, especially by emphasizing New Literatures in English and translation and cultural studies, but while retaining a strong linguistics base. He noted that this shift occurred because it was felt that ELT may start directing the whole structure of knowledge in English studies. Stepping back, GJV also argued that English was a 'cementing subject' linking regions and overcoming social barriers. This met with significant agreement; another comment quoted by GJV, that 'English for Business is business for English', found less favour.

PT drew upon her experience in DU to raise several questions for further discussion, especially: whether language can be taught through literature, and whether there should be less emphasis on English and more on Indian languages in Indian HE. She felt that English literary studies has a specific place in India, but its structure and delivery needs to be reconsidered in terms of student needs. She noted a kind of pedagogic hierarchy based on over-determining English literature that has traditionally operated in DU, whereby a great deal more status obtains in teaching English (literature) Hons students

than students from other areas who do a compulsory Pass course in English – and where the latter are obliged to engage with English literature rather than language. The normative weight put on literature at the expense of language arguably raises various contradictions in English studies in Indian HE, PT observed. MS was similarly interested in the possibility of teaching the English language through literature. She gave a brief account of the somewhat beleaguered development of ELT in DU. This began in the early 1980s with the initiative of some teachers who had been literature students and who decided to develop ELT by moving away from the study of the literary canon and focusing instead on anthologies of texts; and who thereafter informed themselves in ELT methodologies. MS reported on a project to devise texts that could be used by literature teachers for ELT, targeting students at different levels.

SupC observed that it was important, in these deliberations, to bear in mind the particular position of the English language in India – which is overwhelmingly not that of a native language or a mother tongue, but of a second or third language. SG recalled “practical English” courses in some ESL/EFL contexts and wondered whether those might be appropriate for English studies students in Indian HE. He also expressed doubts about the terminology “native”/ “foreign”, and about its applicability to the position of the English language in India, where it is arguably not quite a “foreign” language in the sense that it is in some ESL/EFL contexts -- and also suggesting that the biogenetic investment suggested by “native” and “mother tongue” is perhaps best dispensed with. HT objected that there are languages that are unquestionably Indian whereas English is, in India, a colonial inheritance which continues to play an imperialistic role. In a general way, he felt that the entire discussion of the workshop was skewed by the vested interests of the participants, who all had a professional stake in teaching and sustaining English. More diverse participation might consider, he felt, the possibility that languages like Hindi, Bengali, Tamil and so on – which are used by larger constituencies in India (e.g. Hindi at around 40%, as opposed to the 10% of optimistically estimated English users) – should be more actively promoted in Indian HE (and indeed in civil society) at the expense of English. So concomitantly should literature in Indian languages. He wished the debate to keep in view a possible agenda for decolonizing HE, and public and corporate sectors of employment, by putting English in the position of any other Indian language – by diluting its dominant position and situating it within a more equitable perspective of Indian languages. SG felt that the view of English as a colonial inheritance, and the agenda for decolonizing education to ensure a more equitable view of Indian languages, is to many a narrow view under current circumstances. This is no longer a domestic issue: the growth and demand for English is an international phenomenon, and powerfully evident in contexts with no colonial pasts (such as China and Japan) and even amidst former colonizing contexts (within continental Europe). The growing demand for English literacy in India – for which there is strong evidence – is now more a symptom of that international situation rather than simply due to colonial history. To offer a political critique of the dominance of English now it is no longer sufficient to cite the history of the domestic context, but necessary to engage international capitalism. MP observed that nevertheless it is worth

considering the agenda of trying to establish a more equitable linguistic situation in India, and promoting Indian languages which are suffering from the dominance of English. He cited EFL/ESL contexts where English literature is not disregarded but placed alongside, and sometimes conveyed through, indigenous languages – so that in Brazil or China, for instance, English literature is often taught in the Portuguese or Chinese languages respectively. The same could conceivably be more appropriate for the Indian context. SG felt that having started as a colonial inheritance, the English language now benefits the Indian context in international exchanges in a way which is unlikely to be easily eschewed, and should arguably be cultivated. DC noted that the allocation of a similar role as English to Indian languages, particularly the majority language Hindi, has occasionally been strongly resisted in different regions in India. A bottom-up demand for English literacy in India was reiterated by others.

SB summed up with five issues that the session suggested should be pursued: (1) Why should English studies be a major subject in Indian HE at all?; (2) Given English studies is an appropriate subject for Indian HE, how should it be pursued?; (3) Policy changes at government level are driving changes in English studies from outside; (4) The question is then not just what to teach but how to teach it; and, (5) Assessment is a crucial factor in this.

Panel 4: English Language: Is it the Real Core of English Studies?

Main contributors: Mohammad Asaduddin (MA), Tapan Basu (TB), Rama Mathew (RM), Ruchi Kaushik (RK), Debanjan Chakrabarti (DC), Suman Gupta (SG), Harish Trivedi (HT)

MA made the following points by way of introducing this session and clarifying the background: that in a multilingual and multicultural context such as India, the teaching of English would be different from that in an English-speaking context; that the importance of translation (even at a pedagogic level within English studies) should not be overlooked; that generally the English language has proved to be a tool of empowerment in India (and literary studies in English has opened up critical perspectives such as post-colonialism); that, at the same time, the cultivation of English has meant that Indian languages suffer and students often have a poor grasp of their mother tongues. In response to previous discussions, MA observed: that there is a need to introduce skills-based language courses for English alongside literary study in Indian HE; that language and literature shouldn't be divorced from each other; and that space should also be made for Indian pluralisms in English studies by trying to factor in varieties of Indian English.

TB focused on what he regarded as the growing bifurcation of English studies – whereas previously literary studies was centre stage, of late an emphatic claim on behalf of English language studies and teaching has appeared. However, he felt that literature teachers are not equipped to teach the language, and that policies which seek to orient

the discipline as a whole towards the latter at the expense of the former have not been adequately thought through in terms of existing staffing and resources. TB was also sceptical about the ideological agendas at work in turning programmatically away from literary studies towards language studies apropos English in Indian HE. He averred that literary studies have been ideologically radical, whereas language studies in India have tended to be conservative – enabling purposive use, presented as value-neutral, eschewing social struggle, and playing along with dominant class and caste interests. He noted, however, a schism being introduced by subaltern perspectives within the conservatism of English language studies, especially in terms of Dalit championing of education in English because Dalits regard it as having emancipative potential (a position which has a considerable history and has been strongly urged recently). SG observed that thinking of language studies as conservative was misconceived – much language studies (especially with regard to English) is as, if not more, socially engaged as literary studies – and the misconception arose from thinking of language studies narrowly and exclusively in terms of ELT (a particular province of applied linguistics). HT commented that feeling that a literature teacher should not and cannot teach the language is itself an elitist position. DC disagreed with TB's assessment of the position of English language teaching in India, and suggested that it arose from a tendency of the literary academy to act as gate-keepers of English in India. He cited evidence to the contrary (the social relevance of the English language in India) by drawing upon, and thereby reporting on, some British Council activities in India. DC mentioned various relevant outreach partnerships with both state and corporate organizations in India, and multilateral research and publication projects involving Indian and British collaborations. Developments in West Bengal designed to ensure that students were better prepared when they reached university were cited. DC argued that the issues under discussion were influenced by the fact that funding for education as a discipline in India is comparatively low.

RM raised the questions: what do we want to teach English for and who should be taught? She clarified the distinctions between general English teaching and purposive applied English teaching, the different considerations that relate to students' levels of competence, and the usefulness of various methods of testing. She observed that since English is arguably not being taught adequately at school level, universities would need to make arrangements for appropriate measures and offered suggestions as to what these could be. The kinds of materials and courses that could be devised to help teachers do this were considered. RM referred to courses that might be developed, e.g. 'English for Advanced Reading', 'English for Advanced Writing'. She also referred to her own project on English Language Proficiency. She considered that writing was the weakest skill and training in this skill could be managed better in the internal assessment stage; at present, she felt, teachers were reluctant to mark down weaker students simply for poor written English. RM cited also the situation at the new Ambedkar University where training in English for academic purposes was part of the curriculum from the beginning and continued into their masters' courses in the form of on-going support.

RM also talked about the need to establish an English Language Teaching/ Pedagogy Department, separate from the English Literature Department or the Linguistics Department in universities. This served at least two main purposes: firstly, the language courses that students needed to pursue in the university should be designed, developed, and approved by those whose specialism is in ELT/pedagogy and assessment as opposed to the present practice where those with training/specialism in literature take on this responsibility. Secondly, teachers who are language teachers and acquire specialisations/degrees and qualifications in ELT and SLA (Second Language Acquisition) should have avenues for promotions just as teachers in literature departments do. More importantly, language teachers should be able to pursue research in different aspects of ELT, which is critical to designing and offering good language courses. In the present arrangement, ELT research is only possible in Education Departments which demand knowledge and experience in general education and offer degrees in Education and not in ELT or ELE. Further a fully-fledged department in ELE will also be able to offer pedagogy courses for beginning ELT teachers; so far no such university courses/programmes are available in India except in four universities: EFL University, Hyderabad; Aligarh Muslim University; Gauhati University; and HM Patel Institute of English Training and Research, Vallabh Vidya Nagar, Gujarat. As a result, language teachers in colleges have just picked up their skills and abilities from their own experience. ELT is more than just (good) experience. If language teaching is an English teacher's 'bread and butter' (as Poonam Trivedi observed), it needs to be legitimised and professionalised.

SG enquired about the role of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis and descriptive linguistics in relation to English language studies in India, since the discussion of language studies seemed to be heavily dominated by ELT: weren't those regarded as a part of English studies in India? RM felt that though those are pursued in pockets, the pedagogy debate was centred on literary studies rather than on linguistics and language learning.

RK also addressed herself to the question of who the students of English are and what sort of input they may provide for teaching practices? This was explored in a pilot study to determine students' reservations about their courses and to recommend adjustments in methodology and approach in teaching. A questionnaire-based survey was conducted with 39 students at the Sri Ram College of Commerce. The questionnaire delved three areas: exploring the need for and purpose of English, rating proficiency levels, and evaluating study methods. Some questions sought particularly to obtain a sense of student expectations by asking them to think from the teaching perspective -- for instance, by asking them to devise a course. RK reported on the results, noting in passing that 75% of the students felt English should be compulsory for students in all areas. She observed that in a College of Commerce the aim of teaching English was to enable students to communicate effectively in the market place, to use literary texts as a way to think about business, and to encourage students to think for themselves.

Panel 5: Scholarship and Research: What can it tell us? What are the key questions for the future?

Main contributors: Mohammad Asaduddin (MA), Supriya Chaudhuri (SupC), Rohini Mokashi-Punekar (RM), Harish Trivedi (HT), Prasanta Chakravarty (PC), Suman Gupta (SG)

SG described the system of research funding in England, and the effect that having to specify the public 'impact' of their research was having on academics. He also referred to funding models in Australia, US, and Dutch systems. In his view the question 'how can research in English studies develop economic impact?' could only be answered to a limited extent given the conservative ways in which 'economic impact' was conceived. A more complex understanding of economic and other kinds of impacts (and their connections) in relation to academic research might be more valuable. He asked participants to reflect on the 'impact', in those terms, of the current workshop and project. It was generally agreed that nothing equivalent had been considered in academic circles in Indian HE.

MA commented that not much had changed in Indian research systems in recent years. However, the new and broader subject areas that are being defined and instituted in some universities are allowing for new questions to emerge. RM described her different experience in an out-of-Delhi IIT, the IIT Gauhati. Looking back to earlier questions, she noted that the issue of school teaching of English and the general standard of the competence of entrants in English were significant in this context too. RM felt that the approach to literature in the IITs was always comparative and she argued for research to also work within this kind of framework. She also suggested it was useful to reflect particularly on the teaching of Dalit literature. This is not historicised or taught in a strongly contextualised manner, she maintained, because writers did not wish to see themselves as part of a historically conditioned phenomenon.

SupC gave an account of the current condition of research in English studies in India, observing that research is largely funded by the 'state' and by international bodies. She observed that the fields of research have diversified and expanded in a salutary manner to take in cultural studies, media studies, gender and caste studies, etc. (giving examples of several projects and centres in Jadavpur Univ.), without losing strengths in more conventional areas of English literary research. She emphasised that the perspective on research is likely to be significantly different in different categories of institutions, such as central universities, state universities (of which Jadavpur is a particularly successful instance in terms of research), colleges, and so on. That the research activity and outputs are not adequately collated in bibliographical records for English studies was noted. SupC recalled the Nagarajan and Datta eds. indexes of the 1970s. She also gave a sense of how research activity is tracked now through the National Assessment and Accreditation Council's 5-yearly assessment of every university. Others commented on relatively recent systems for accounting and giving incentives for research that have been instituted by universities, and it was generally held that these are not robust. In this

context, doubts were also expressed about peer reviewing practices in scholarly publications, and regulation of plagiarism and research quality. One of the participants linked this to the lack of external examining regulations for undergraduate courses in their universities. Another felt that research output was hampered by the exhausting effect of teaching loads in many institutions. SupC concluded that an important way forward is through international collaborations, focused on – for example – Digital Humanities.

HT recounted changes since the 1960s and a shift from broader scholarship to a narrower conception of research which had become 'professionalised' and more measured by outputs. He saw benefit in research which adopted a more contextualised approach. HT thought this was not encouraged within what he described as a 'scientific' funding model, where discoveries were seen as something to be funded only on first occurrence. He noted the large increase in the number of PhDs, but noted also that the field of study had become narrow – in his experience the majority of PhDs were focused now on regional identity and literature in an Indian language. Finally he looked for a closer link between research and teaching.

PC presented on the impact that the gradual marketization of HE is having on scholarship, especially for English studies. In particular, he cited the case of left-leaning researchers (who however do not press an overt political agenda in their scholarship) who have pursued valuable research projects in literary and cultural studies, of particular moment in Indian contexts, with integrity and humility. Three such academic engagements were described. PC observed that such scholarly pursuits had been put in an ambivalent position by the growing pressures of the education market, and that a response needs to be conceptualised and acted upon within scholarly circles.

Final Round-up Session

Makarand Paranjape (MP), Richard Allen (RA), all participants

MP gave a summing-up of the issues arising from the workshop discussions which interested him particularly. He started by acknowledging how useful the workshop had been: it brought several members of the profession face to face, which rarely happens. In addition, for the first time concrete realities were discussed, including government policies and their impact on the academy, rather than just abstractions and theories. After listening to the presentations on the XIth and XIIth plans he had felt that there was a great mismatch between policy makers (the government and its bureaucracy), the stake-holders (the teachers), and the end-users (the students). The result was that English studies in India rarely delivered what the market needed or what was "good" for the students. A BA in English, by itself, did not train a person for any specific job. Further, he observed that how the area of English studies in India is discussed is very largely dependent on the kind of pre-conceived frame that is assumed. To think of English as an imperialist imposition, an instrument of emancipation, a global *lingua*

franca, an area of social activism or resistance, an Indian or not an Indian language, etc. all bring their particular limitations, and that's what makes the area worth discussing in forums such as this. He felt that there is a demand for English in India that needs to be met, and also an urgent need for promoting and cultivating Indian languages and literatures which shouldn't be neglected. MP also identified some of the issues which this workshop had failed to address sufficiently, especially the relationship of English and other Indian language, and the role of translation in Indian English studies.

RA invited each participant to identify one issue arising from the workshop discussions that needs particular attention. Responses included: the need to address translation, the importance of creating databases for research and pedagogic practices in India, the necessity for greater understanding of student attitudes and expectations, the autonomy of English departments, the need to involve those specialising in Indian languages in such discussions, further exploration of the relationship between schools and HE, and (perhaps a tiny bit facetiously?) an agenda for abolishing English literary studies from Indian HE.

PART 2: ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

1. **Literature and literacy:** The degree to which, and manner in which, HE level English studies should accommodate language teaching was consistently raised as an issue which calls for further discussion. The emphasis at HE level currently is on literary studies. It was generally felt that a powerful demand for linguistic competence is made by large numbers of students of HE English studies, especially at undergraduate level. The options that are available are: (a) to teach the English language through literature [this makes practical sense given that at present English departments are preponderantly staffed with literature teachers/researchers]; (b) to re-orient the English studies curriculum so as to maintain its integrity while offering a mutually-informed but distinctive offering of literary and (primarily applied) linguistics studies [this does entail reconsideration of staffing and resourcing practices]; (c) to have distinct and clearly sign-posted provision for literary studies in English and English language teaching within institutions, perhaps in separate departments [this might mean that literary studies will suffer]. A related issue was the extent to which **teaching of English in schools** has a bearing on HE English studies, especially insofar as skills in the English language are concerned. It was strongly felt that school teaching is proving inadequate for the current structure of HE English studies. This should be explored further by: (a) examining differing practices in this regard in different categories of schools; (b) determining where precisely, and for what sorts of schooling backgrounds, does a deficit in language skills occur; and (c) considering ways of addressing the deficit by recommending ways

of/policies for improving schooling in English and/or ways of addressing deficits within HE (which returns to the concerns picked up earlier in this point).

2. **Anxieties in English literary studies:** By and large the participants were reluctant to have literary studies play a secondary role to language teaching and linguistics in HE English studies, and felt it has a valuable contribution to make. To some extent this attitude derived from anxiety about future employment of a significant cohort of literary specialists who currently hold academic positions in Indian HE and of those who, currently in education, will become aspirants to such positions. To a considerable extent also this attitude derived from a conviction in the public value of English literary studies as it has been pursued in Indian HE: it is regarded as a site for cultivating critical thinking and responding to and intervening in social concerns, and there is a significant history of such critical thinking and intervention to refer to. Moreover, because of the international reach of English, literary studies scholars have been able to do this in a manner which contributes to and is informed by scholarship in other geopolitical contexts. It is felt that since critical thinking and social intervention are public functions which are unlikely to be encouraged in top-down structures of governance, any top-down re-orientation of HE which dilutes English literary studies will also seek to dumb down critical thinking and social intervention. The narrow view of language studies that prevailed in the workshop meant that it was regarded as coeval with ELT, and the similar public function that language studies (sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, for instance) plays in relation to English wasn't registered; equally, relative under-development and under-resourcing of language studies in the broader sense in India might mean that it has in fact been significantly less active in cultivating critical thinking and social intervention. There is a need to articulate more clearly, and give evidence for, what the public function of English studies in India has been and is – in terms of cultivating critical thinking and social intervention. That is, of course, insofar as it is accepted as having such a function.
3. **English within the spectrum of Indian languages:** In relation to 2, it is urged that while English studies appears to be an area of critical thinking and social intervention, it actually has the effect of covertly acting against the grain of those: it is an elite language which exacerbates socio-economic differences in India; it has the effect of diluting attention to Indian languages which are more closely connected to Indian everyday lives, traditions and histories, and sense of identity; it is ultimately an imperialist and neo-imperialist imposition (a view that is held in numerous geopolitical contexts). There is a plausible case, therefore, for not simply considering what the balance of language and literature should be in HE English studies in India, but whether the balance of English studies in relation to studies in other Indian languages shouldn't change in favour of the latter. At the same time, it is also felt that despite the fact that English is indeed an imperialist and neo-imperialist imposition, the situation that

obtains thereby has rendered English necessary as cultural and social capital, and that there is a significant ground-level demand for English competence amongst traditionally dispossessed constituencies. These considerations argue strongly for further discussion – perhaps in two separate panels in the next workshop: (a) one on the relationship of English studies to studies in other Indian languages, with participation from scholars in Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, etc.; and (b) the role that translation plays in Indian literary studies in all its languages, and the place of English therein. The issue of **translation** is, in fact, a distinct and significant one: its place *within* English studies – in pedagogy and scholarship – also demands further attention.

- 4. The student perspective:** In the workshop discussions a consistent concern was the need to address student expectations and aspirations within the curriculum and in pedagogic practices. The paucity of evidence on students' expectations and aspirations was numerous noted. Teachers' experiences suggest that students largely have a functional approach to engaging English studies: primarily to get degrees which will improve employment prospects, and to become competent in the English language. It was generally felt that by and large students are not particularly invested in literary and cultural studies and critical thinking. While there is no reason to doubt the impressions of experienced teachers, it would be useful to have more methodologically rigorous evidence of student expectations and aspirations, and a better-graded understanding of the extent to which language learning, critical thinking, literary study, etc. are of interest to students of English. Several presentations in the workshop were based on student surveys, which suggest the obvious way of trying to obtain such indicative evidence. These surveys, valuable in themselves, were conducted by the presenters in question and were necessarily limited to the particular and small cohorts of students they teach. A scaled-up survey administered to a wider sampling of students at different levels and areas and institutions would undoubtedly be very useful in this regard. The purpose of gauging student expectations and aspirations is itself a complex matter, and needs further discussion – especially insofar as such gauges are seen as drivers for curriculum and programme reform. On the one hand, there is indubitably a need to be responsive to these, and the most functional need of the student (i.e. to be in a position to obtain employment eventually) is unquestionably a most significant one. On the other hand, students are not necessarily fully cognisant of the possibilities that their fields of study present, and may have a relatively limited perspective of their fields of study. It is the responsibility of those designing curricula and programmes to convey to students the full possibilities of their fields of study, functional as well as other, and to bring students to examine and consider areas which they may not be aware of.
- 5. Evidence and documentation:** Much of the workshop discussion was based on particular individual experiences and impressions and memories, which carried

weight in being confirmed (or not) by others, but which could be usefully undergirded by relevant documentation to refer to. The poverty of relevant documentation apropos English studies in India was oft noted in the workshop. Four areas were identified in which generating and archiving such documentation in an accessible fashion is likely to be useful: (a) the kind of scaled-up student attitude and expectation survey mentioned in 4; (b) an ongoing index or bibliographical resource for research projects and scholarly publications relevant to English studies with a national scope; (c) an archive of relevant government (central and state) policy discussions and documents; (d) a centralised archive of programme content and pedagogic practices for English studies in Indian HE. Such documentation would naturally be useful for any discipline, and models are likely to exist already in other disciplines which could be consulted in creating these. Models for these do exist in UK HE for English studies, which may or may not be useful for Indian circumstances – that is matter for discussion. In general, how such documentation projects may be realised is possibly another area for a panel discussion in the next workshop.

6. **Marketization:** Several presentations in the workshop expressed deep reservations about the market-oriented policies that are being imposed on publicly-funded HE institutions, or what was called “marketization” in a shorthand manner. Such marketization in education was seen as symptomatic of a larger marketization which delineates social and political organization widely now, and is effectively operating upon all areas of social life. In a way, it appeared at times in the workshop that “marketization” is in some danger of becoming an implicitly norm-laden term (negatively loaded) which lacks definition and needs to be more sharply articulated to enable discussion of this view. It was evident that the term is meant to gesture towards the governance of publicly-funded educational institutions as if they are businesses to generate profits (or at least break even), so that the public interest that justifies public-funding of education is hampered. This hampering could happen partly by dumbing-down the critical edge and social engagement of research and pedagogy (which may not be profitable and may indeed be resistant on behalf of public interest), partly by generating uneven access and opportunities (so that ultimately those who can afford it can best avail of educational opportunities), and partly by enabling private (corporate) interests to be served by using public investments and under the guise of public interests. More precise information and analysis is needed to examine how and whether this works for public education in India now, and whether and how it works in English studies: e.g. by undertaking a few case studies of specific instances of such policies and with rigorous demonstration of their effects. The normative weight that the terms “marketization” and “market” seem to have acquired may be unproductive. Arguably, there is no public interest organization without its market mores, and public interest distribution systems necessarily follow particular market principles. These are all matter for further and more nuanced discussion.

Interestingly, some of the practices associated with capitalist market arrangements seemed to be regarded approvingly for public sector education even by those who are sceptical of marketization: such as, the need to respond to student expectations and aspirations (not far off from understanding students as clients), and the desirability of greater accountability and transparency in what researchers/teachers do (with some notion that investment should be balanced by returns). The arguments against existing policies to enable the latter that were aired suggested that such policies are reached without adequate consultation, aren't sufficiently invested in, and are worse than alternative policies. Further and more rigorously argued discussion is needed of such qualms, outlining, for instance: (a) the precise ways in which current policies fail and with evidence thereof; (b) more appropriate procedures of consultation after considering the consultation processes that were undertaken; and (c) the better alternatives to the currently adopted policies that are available. There is also a larger question on how education in a "de-marketized" society (if that's what is sought) should ensure responsiveness to students and accounting of teaching/research, or whether the latter are desirable at all.