School of Humanities

NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY
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Website: www.wbnsou.ac.in

UGC-DEB Sponsored 2-Day National Level Workshop-and-Symposium for Content Developers on NEP based 4-Year UG Programme in English

(Organised by The Department of English, School of Humanities, Netaji Subhas Open University)

Workshop Report

Report Prepared by: Soumabha Chakraborty, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, SoH., NSOU.

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Introduction

Netaji Subhas Open University is preparing to implement NEP at the undergraduate level from the 2025-26 academic session. The syllabi have already been finalised and therefore the university is embarking on the development of Self Learning Materials and allied MOOCs. To initiate the process of the development of contents, the Department of English had organised a 2-Day UGC-DEB sponsored National Level Workshop and Symposium for Content Developers on NEP based 4 Year UG Programme in English on 22-23rd August, 2024, at NSOU Salt Lake Campus in blended mode.

Location and Period

The workshop was organised on 22-23rd August, 2024 at the Board Room, NSOU, Salt Lake Campus in blended mode.
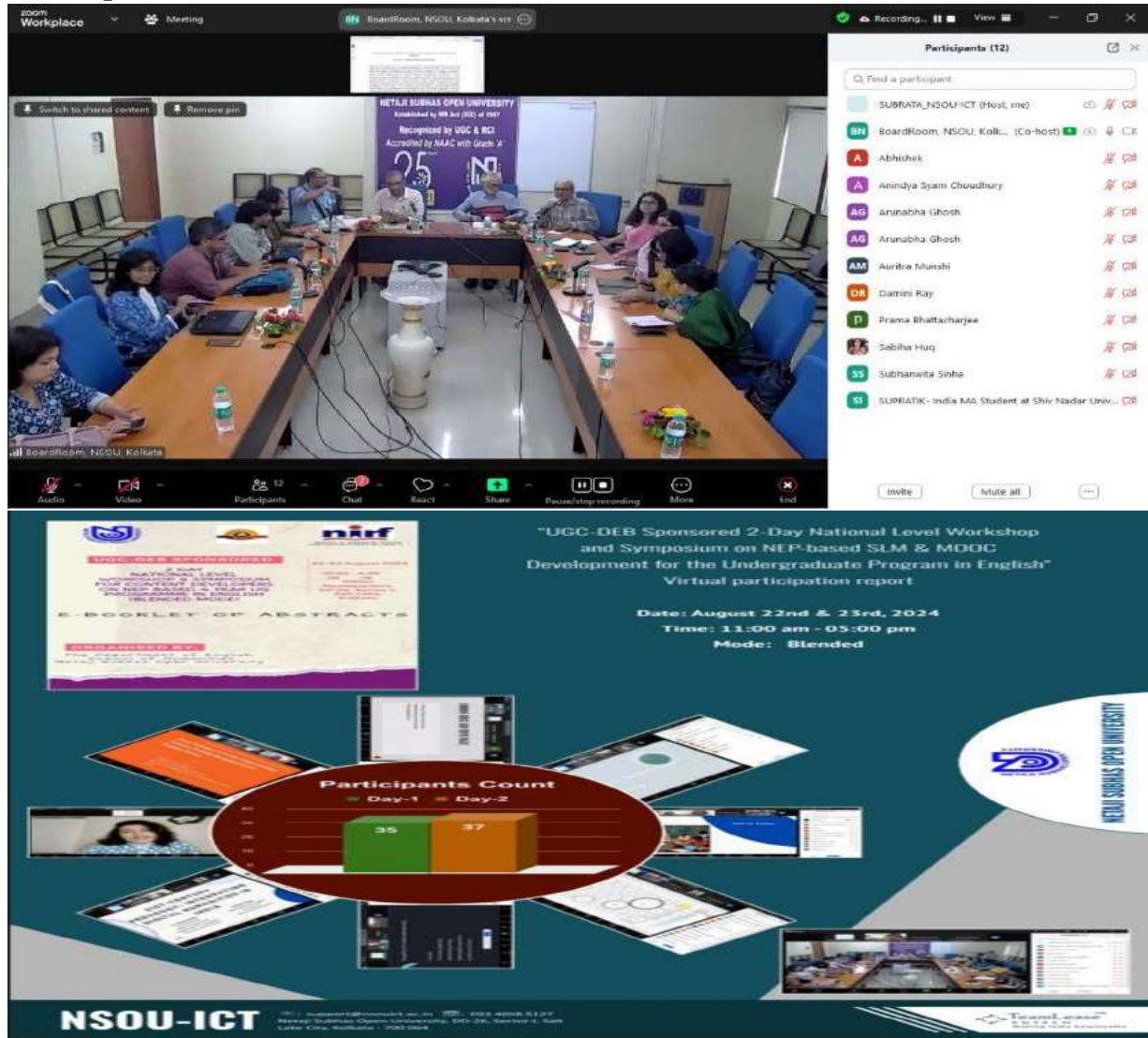
Opening

The workshop began at 10.30 am on 22nd August with Dr Srideep Mukherjee, OiC, SoH, introducing the session and talking about the importance of the workshop. He discussed our syllabus development based on the NEP regulations. He also mentioned that our present workshop was focused on the preparation of the SLMs for the first four semesters. Five courses were addressed in this regard – Creative Writing and Literature (MDC 3) for Semester III, English for Specific Purposes (SEC 3) for Semester III, Introduction to Literature and Language (DSC 1) for Semester I, Introduction to Literary Criticism (DSC 3) for Semester III, and Digital Humanities (DSC 4) for Semester IV.

Objectives of the Workshop

1. The primary objective of the workshop was to initiate the process of developing the contents of the SLMs as per the new syllabi developed to implement NEP at UG level at the NSOU. In order to do so, the workshop and symposium was organised for the content developers so that the discussions facilitate and enrich them in their process of content development.
2. Apart from that, the workshop cum symposium was also organized so that the university can consider the scope of implementing the outcomes of the discussion to initiate the process of future MOOCs and SWAYAM courses.

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Participation

The workshop cum symposium was attended by 10 Resource Persons (including 1 Special Lecturer), 6 Participant Presenters, 7 Moderators, 4 Course Introducers and several Participants in both physical and virtual mode. The sessions were attended by 35 participants on Day 1 and by 37 participants on Day 2. Among them, on Day 1, around 25 participants joined physically and around 10 people joined virtually. On Day 2, the approximate numbers of physical participation were around 25 and of virtual participation was around 12.

Workshop Sessions and Discussions

Day 1 [22nd August, 2024]

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Phase 1: Creative Writing and Literature (MDC 3)

Following the opening, the syllabus for Creative Writing and Literature was introduced by Ms Debottama Ghosh, Course Coordinator and Assistant Professor of English. She mentioned that the nature of the course is multidisciplinary and that the course is designed for 3rd semester students, awarding 4 credits upon completion. She emphasized on the fact that the course is merely not on Creative Writing, but it links creative writing with literature. English, she discussed, although is the medium of the course delivery, this course is however geared towards the students of every discipline. The use of vernacular while delivering the course will bridge the gap for students who feel intimidated by the use of the English language.

Technical Session 1

The session was moderated by Prof. Himadri Lahiri who began with the introduction to the Resource Persons.

Talk 1: The first talk was delivered by Dr Poulomi Das, Assistant Professor, Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities,as the first Resource Person of the session. The title of her presentation was "Breathing, Meditation, and the Yogi: What Can be Taught about Creative Writing". She explained that the title was a metaphor for pausing and slowing down. She drew an analogy between breathing and meditation and creative writing. Furthermore, she discussed that the teaching of the course of Creative Writing is a paradox. Following, the rough outline of the module was discussed as well as the challenges of offering this course to the students studying in an open education mode. The competence ladder of the students while pursuing this course, and caution to be taken by the facilitators were discussed in detail. Finally, with the strategies of making the SLMs, specially making them activity based for the course was discussed and the first talk of the workshop concluded.

Talk 2: The second talk of the session was delivered by Dr Nishi Pulugurtha, Associate Professor of English, Brahmananda Keshab Chandra College, as the second Resource Person of the session. The title of the paper of "Writing on Non Fiction: Some Thoughts". Dr Pulugurtha began the talk by differentiating between academic writing and creative writing. The discussion continued with the discussion of the stigma over English among students. She focused on the importance of keeping in mind the target audience while preparing the SLMs. The objective should be, as discussed, to enable the capacity of finding content everywhere among students. Also, it was discussed that the language of the SLMs should be as less complicated as possible. As a demo for the SLM-structuring, Dr Pulugurtha discussed the text of "My Mother's Tongue" by Zavi Kang Engles.

Interactions: 1. The Oic, SoH discussed that the course is activity based since the structuring of the course is not based on merely theoretical approach, but demands active participation from the students. Hence activity becomes a focal point in the course, making the delivery more learner centric.

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2. Based on the first point of interaction, it was discussed that the SLMs should be activity-based and therefore should be constructed in a way that propels engagement among the learners.

3. It was also apprehended that students are not very keen on taking up the session, therefore the facilitators should try to get rid of the stigma over the English language among students.

4. A conversational manner in the SLM is thought to be more convenient for the learners.

The session was summed up by the moderator Prof Himadri Lahiri stating the importance of contextualising the materials of the course in the distance mode of education and implementing it accordingly.

Special Lecture: A special lecture was delivered by Dr Sumana Roy, Associate Professor of Creative Writing, Ashoka University. The title of her lecture was "The 'I' in the Creative Writing Classroom". Dr Roy stated that creative writing is an art form and like any other creative art form, creative writing can also be taught. She insisted that we should dissolve the false binary between creative and critical. Rather the rationale behind creative writing syllabus is to get rid of the institutional regression of the "creative". Her lecture discussed how the subjective "I" in creative writing is celebrated and gives form to the creation. Writing, therefore, she concluded, is an act of argument resulting in agreement.

Technical Session 2

This session was moderated by Prof Amzed Hossein, Department of English, NSOU. This session had two participant presenters – Dr Tanmoy Putatunda and Sampriti Bhattacharya, who talked on "Critical Thinking and Creative Writing: Explorations in Literary Pedagogy" and "From Fracture to Form: Understanding Creative Writing through Trauma" respectively.

Presentation 1: Dr Tanmoy Putatunda, Assistant Professor of English, KIIT, Bhubaneswar, talked on "Critical Thinking and Creative Writing: Explorations in Literary Pedagogy" and focused on students' activities. He talked about the four-quadrant brain – A. Logical, Analytical, B. Organized, Detailed, C. Expressive, Emotional, D. Holistic, Intuitive. The pedagogical implications include Transformative Strategy and Destabilizing Hierarchies. Dr Putatunda also spoke about the importance of ambiguity and multiplicity and concluded by saying how Creative Writing fosters diversity and creates spaces for marginalised voices.

Presentation 2: Sampriti Bhattacharya, PhD Research Fellow (UGC-JRF), Dept of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIEST Shibpur, talked on "From Fracture to Form: Understanding Creative Writing through Trauma". She discussed how trauma, for many, works as a catalyst for creative writing and how something so destructive as trauma can give birth to something creative. Referring to Malabou's concept of "destructive plasticity", she explained how trauma impacts the structure of any creative writing. She concluded her talk by showing how trauma was implemented in constructing the narratives of her own personal poems and how her works reflect her reaction to her personal trauma.

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Interactions: A question was raised on how trauma response writing differs from the confessional writings, to which Ms Bhattacharya replied that confessional writings usually always accompany elements of trauma within them.

Phase 2: English for Specific Purposes (SEC 3)

The second phase of the workshop began with an introduction to the course by Dr Srideep Mukherjee, OiC, SoH and a brief introduction to the Resource Persons. The session was followed by the addressing of the moderator Dr Someswar Bhowmik, OiC, Centre for Online Education, NSOU. He talked about the nature of the online mode of education and how it is important to make the delivery learner centric. He also talked about the plans for future expansion to the SWAYAM platforms.

Following, we had an Introduction to the course by Ms Sinjini Dutta, Certified Cambridge Trainer. Ms Dutta explained how ESP should be learner specific and how the curriculum should be arranged accordingly. She differentiated between English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and discussed that the course should take a skill-based and industry-oriented approach. She further added the importance of collating the materials in a properly structured and learner-centric form. While giving the overview of the course, she discussed Hutchinson's Blueprint for ESP, starting from definition to the design, application and expectations from the course.

Technical Session 3

Talk 1: A talk on "Negotiating Skills with English for Hospital Management" was delivered by the Resource Person Subhradeep Dutta, Cambridge Programme Leader for Educational Leadership Programme. Mr Dutta talked about understanding, evaluating and contextualising the course and how online teaching resources can play a significant role in shaping the mode of delivery. He explained the function of certain tools as Mentimeter and Padlet that can facilitate the learning outcomes.

Talk 2: The second talk of the session on "Inculcating Skills for Navigating the Media Landscape Today" was delivered by Fredrik Wollentz, Editor and Creative Writing Teacher, Vendels Falag Sweden. He talked about focusing on the necessities of the learners while designing a course like ESP. he discussed the forms, styles and gave examples of journalistic writings. Furthermore, he discussed the importance of research, pitching interviews, editing and holding up moral and ethical considerations while doing journalistic works. He concluded with a detailed discussion of the differences between Digital and Print Media, using the rapidly developing technologies, and adapting the language according to the target audience.

Interactions: 1. A discussion between Ms Hilda Peacock and Ms Radhika Bagadthey on the different approached towards ESP

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2. A discussion by Ms Shinjini Dutta on the course structuring for online delivery, guided learning session, and using BPO call recordings as case studies for students.

3. Dr Someswar Bhowmick discussed how to turn the courses into a full-fledged SWAYAM course, mentioning that a 4-credit course will require a minimum of 40-hours engagement sessions, including video lectures, e-text materialization, interactive sessions, assessments and examination. Additionally, it was also discussed that the courses should not bore the learners, lest they should opt out of the course.

Phase 3: Introduction to Literature and Language (DSC 1)

This session was conducted by the Course Coordinator Dr Himadri Lahiri, Professor of English, NSOU, with content writers in blended mode.

Day 2 [23rd August, 2024]

Phase 4: Introduction to Literary Criticism (DSC 3)

The phase began with the introduction the course by Course Co-Coordinator Professor Himadri Lahiri, NSOU. Professor Lahiri briefly discussed the syllabus and structure of the course and discussed about the major literary theory that are to be addressed. The following session was moderated by Professor Ashok Sengupta, formerly Professor of English, NSOU.

Technical Session 4

Talk 1: The first lecture of Day 2 was delivered by Professor Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha, School of Translation and Cultural Studies, ILSR Kolkata, and Dept of English, Kazi Nazrul University. His talk was on "From Criticism to Critique: Trajectories and Signposts of Literary-cultural Theory". Prof Purakayastha emphasised on the fact that literary theories are not in contradiction with criticism, rather they should be viewed as continuation and expansion of literary criticism. His lecture focused on getting out of the dogma of puritanism regarding the consideration of what can be called literature and what not in the discipline of literary studies. He also favoured inclusivity as opposed to gatekeeping of the discipline and discussed how it is important to have dialogues with other discipline, thereby finding interdisciplinary approaches such as medical humanities of digital humanities.

Talk 2: The second lecture was delivered by Professor Anindya Syam Choudhury, Dept of English, Assam University. His lecture was titled "Literary Stylistics: A Historical Trajectory". In his lecture, Professor Choudhury made an attempt to define stylistics and differentiated between linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics. In his talk, he referred to Roman Jakobson, Viktor Shklovsky, Vladimir Propp and Jan Mukarovsky while discussing terms such as "actualisation", "defamiliarization", and how it was attempted to have a scientific approach towards literary criticism. He also talked about New Critics and later

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development with Noam Chomsky and Transformational Generative Grammar. Finally with a discussion of Stanley Fish he concluded his lecture.

Moderator's Note: Professor Ashok Sengupta, the moderator of the session, extensively commented on the nature of literary theory while having interactions with both Professor Purakayastha and Professor Choudhury. He talked about how criticism has become a materialist aesthetics and how the plurality of humanistic studies is an expansion enabled by literary theories. He also talked about the crisis of English studies in India and how language was given advantage over literature for industrially effective purposes. He futher discussed how theory needs to be re-theorised and talked about the need for de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of theory.

Interactions: 1. Professor Purakayastha noted that theory functions as a democratic tool and Prof Sengupta pointed out that of making theory relevant in reality.

2. The speakers also discussed how the venturing into knowledge has become difficult not because of its scarcity but because of its abundance.

Technical Session 5

This session was moderated by Dr Srideep Mukherjee, OiC, SoH.

Presentation 1: Dr Narendra Ranjan Malas, Associate Professor of English, Ramananda College, presented his talk on "The Evolution of Poetics: A Study Across the Ages". He discussed how literary theory and literary criticism are interconnected. His talk revisited the function of the word "poetics" in analysing the construction of literary works. His lecture traced the trajectory of the development of the semantic content of the term across the centuries.

Presentation 2: Dr Debamitra Kar, Assistant Professor of English, Women's' College Kolkata, delivered her talk on "Trends in Literary Criticism in the Early Half of the Twentieth Century". Her talk showed the transition from literary criticism of the late 19th century to the early 20th century. She discussed the basic trends of 20th century literary criticism and talked about synaesthesis. The need for synaesthesis is because aesthetics alone failed to address the rising social complexity and therefore the necessity of sociological theorisation.

The session concluded with the moderator thanking the speakers for their valuable presentations.

Phase 5: Digital Humanities (DSE 4)

Course Coordinator Dr Md Intaj Ali, Assistant Professor of English, NSOU, introduced the final phase of the workshop and discussed the detailed division of the syllabus. He further discussed the challenges and scope of the course of including Digital Humanities into the syllabus. Then he handed over the session to the moderator Dr Papiya Upadhyay, Assistant Professor of Education, NSOU.

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Technical Session 6

The session was moderated by Dr Papiya Upadhyay, Assistant Professor of Education, NSOU.

Talk 1: Dr Partha Sarathi Mukhopadhyay, Professor, Dept of Library and Information Science, delivered his talk on "Text/Data Mining and Analysis". He discussed that to understand the text the sematic viewpoint is not enough and the syntactical view is also to be taken into consideration. He also talked about empirical sentiment analysis and showed a few case studies. He also discussed certain tools such as Voyant, Koha, Dandelion etc.

Talk 2: This talk "Twenty First Century Pedagogy: Integrating Digital Humanities in India" was presented by Dr Richa Srishti, Associate Professor, Dept of Languages, Christ (deemed to be) University, Pune and Ms Krishna Pillai, student, 1st Year, MA EDH. The speakers focused on the necessity of rethinking humanities through technology. They talked about several online preservation projects such as Project Madurai, Dalit Camera, Bichitra, 1947 Partition Archives etc. Their session concluded with certain insights to bridge the gap between literature and technology.

The session concluded with Dr Upadhyay's note of thanks and summing up of the session.

Technical Session 7

The session was moderated by Soumabha Chakraborty, Assistant Professor of English, NSOU.

Presentation 1: This presentation titled "Digital Preservation Essentials: Curation, Archiving, and IP Rights for Oral and Audio-Visual Materials" was given by Dr Manas Kr Ganguli, Librarian, Sonamukhi College. Dr Ganguli talked about the importance of digital preservation and how orally transmitted history need to be curated and archived for the next generation through the digital medium. He also talked about the challenges of archiving, managing metadata being of the main issues. Furthermore, he also talked about Intellectual Property Rights and the necessity of allowing open licensing and learning.

Presentation 2: The last presentation of the session was delivered by Dr Anupa Lakhar Goswami, Post-Doctoral Fellow, ICSSR New Delhi on "Data, The Digital World and The Digital Divide". She talked extensively on metadata can be both quantitative and qualitative. Furthermore, she talked about of social media data and the overwhelming information. Also, the implications of data mining and digital divide also were included in her lecture. Finally, she concluded by focusing on the necessity of media literacy.

Interactions: 1. A question was put forward regarding the issue of privacy in the digital world. The speaker Dr Goswami addressed the question by mentioning that digital sensitisation is required, for instance, the applications we install in our smartphones ask for certain permissions and we allow them without even reading them. She also mentioned that certain

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websites demand that we allow cookies, and based on the metadata of our search, advertisements are presented elsewhere when we surf through the internet.

2. Another question was raised forward by Dr Debamitra Kar, that should we not have the freedom of not to be so digitally equipped, as for many the entire digital scenario seems unnecessarily complicated, rendering a feeling of isolation among the people who are hesitant in using them. The speaker Dr Goswami appreciated the thought and added that the overwhelming information of the digital world can really be frustrating for the users in many cases.

3. Following her discussion, Dr Goswami further added that there are many services available in the digital mode, but the majority of the population cannot access them due to the unavailability of the essential skills needed to operate a digital device. Therefore, although on paper there are many services available, the issue of actually making them viable to the users needs to be addressed with seriousness.

Following the interactions, the session was concluded with the summing up of the session by the moderator Soumabha Chakraborty.

Closing

The Workshop and Symposium ended with the summing up of the sessions and note of thanks by Dr Md Intaj Ali.

The following outcomes of the workshop and symposium are as follows:

1. In 5 phases and 7 technical sessions, the workshop and symposium elaborated on five courses that are included in the syllabi of 4-Year UG Programme in English, beginning from the academic session 2025-26.
2. The discussions and interactions addressed the following courses, thereby enriching the content developers for the courses – Creative Writing and Literature (MDC 3) for Semester III, English for Specific Purposes (SEC 3) for Semester III, Introduction to Literature and Language (DSC 1) for Semester I, Introduction to Literary Criticism (DSC 3) for Semester III, and Digital Humanities (DSC 4) for Semester IV.
3. The discussion also propelled the possibility of offering online MOOCs and SWAYAM courses. It was discussed that any 4-credit course should have at least a 40-hour engagement, and that engagement includes Video Lectures, e-Text Materials, Interactive Sessions, Assignments, and Proctored Assessment.
4. Finally, the sessions not only enriched the participants with the work of content development and course delivery, but also enabled the participants to have erudite academic discussions with the Resource Persons and Presenters, thereby facilitating further academic insights among everyone.

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Some Glimpses of the Workshop-cum-Symposium

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