EFFECT OF NATIVIZED STORIES ON THE READING COMPREHENSION OF PAKISTANI ESL LEARNERS AT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

[1]Muhammad Asif, .[2]Mamuna Ghani and [3]Shahid-ullahQuerishi
[1]Department of English , Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Cell# 03075400996, tameer_1@hotmail.com
[2]Department of English, Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Cell# 03027788180,
[3]Govt. Post Graduate College, Jampur
Cell # 03367907950

ABSTRACT : *The study aims at finding the impact of nativization or indigenization of the text on the reading comprehension of ESL learners. The study is delimited to find out the effect of nativized and indigenized material on the reading comprehension of ESL learners at District Dera Ghazi Khan. Experimental research design was adopted to measure the effect of independent variable(Indigenized or nativized text) on the dependant variable(reading comprehension). After the selection of three short stories from Intermediate 1ˢᵗ Year English Textbook taught in Pakistan, a sample based on two groups was formed from the given population. One group (Original or Controlled group) was taught from stories given in First year English textbooks. While another group (nativized or experimental group)was taught from the stories which were nativized or indigenized according to the models adopted by Alptekin, Erten& Karakas and Erten &Razi [1,2,3]by replacing some textual and contextual cues of the original stories to the textual and contextual cues from Pakistani culture. To ascertain the impact of indigenized text on the reading comprehension, an MCQ based test was conducted and administered to both the groups. The results showed a positive effect of the indigenized or nativized stories on the reading comprehension of ESL learners of Dera Ghazi Khan.*

Key Words: Indigenization or nativization, textual cues and contextual cues, reading comprehension

INTRODUCTION

The English language has a "special status" in Pakistani society and educational system. According to Waseem and Jibeen, English has got peculiar second language status though Pakistani learners have no direct access to native speakers[4]. It is the language of academia, politics, literature and media. Mansoor states that it is the instrumental reason for learning this language which makes it compulsory for Pakistani students to develop proficiency in English language[5]. The realization of this fact makes the educationists pay special attention to the teaching of this language in order to get the desired objectives. But different experts and language teachers like Warsi(2004) feel that the situation of teaching English language is not satisfactory in Pakistan[6]. The reasons are dearth of indigenized teaching resources, untrained teachers and faulty syllbi..ELT material or the books of English language are the most effective variables in Pakistani ELT scene. In the present scenario, they seem to be dominant tools for teaching language. Akram and Mahmood (as cited in Rustam, 2008) state that teaching of English in Pakistan has been text book based since independence[7]. Warsi observes in this connection that though theoretically great emphasis is laid on the use of Audio Visual Aids for teaching, yet in practice only English language textbooks are used in the classrooms[6].These English language text books are mostly based on texts portraying foreign culture. Mansoor observes that in Pakistan English language textbooks mostly focus on target(foreign) culture which creates some identity issues and undermines the comparative worth of local culture versus foreign culture[5]. It further poses some problems of comprehension due to unfamiliarity of foreign culture. She supports that inclusion of local culture in the textbooks of English could be helpful for the learners of English in Pakistan. Rustam also observes that culture presented in English language text books mostly has no relevance to the students' local culture

as the material in English language textbooks is written by the authors belonging to British or American culture [7]. Johnson found that reading comprehension is influenced to a great extent by familiar cultural settings despite the complex structure of the text[8] .Apart from the identity issues, the portrayal of foreign culture in textbooks impedes the comprehension of the text. Alptekin observes that, in case of L1 reading, the match between the background knowledge of the learner and content of the text becomes instrumental in improving the reading comprehension of the learner[9]. This match is not available in L2 context where readers cannot find any connection between his/her background knowledge and the content of the text. The activation of the relevant schema (background knowledge) for the comprehension of the text is very important in L2 context. Erten and Razi (2009) also concluded in their research that nativized version of authentic material results in better comprehension[3] .For ESL learners there is need of modification of the text and ,in this connection, Tomlinson supports the indigenization of the text to fascilitate the ESL learners in this regard[10].

The present study aims at finding out the impact of cultural nativization or indigenization on the learners' understanding of the reading texts. Reading is an activity which involves reader's close contact with the text in order to grasp and build up meaning from the text. The reader needs background information of the topic and some understanding of the situational context of the topic. Reading comprehension has three levels: Literal comprehension, inferential comprehension and evaluative comprehension. Literal comprehension is about the explicit information given by the writer in the text. In inferential reading the reader closely finds out the relationship of different situations in the text and infers meaning out of them which are not obviously stated in the given text. On the other hand evaluative comprehension involves the use of critical thinking to make

judgements about the content of text [11]. All these three levels of reading comprehension involve schema of the given text. Whereas schema is background knowledge or prior knowledge which we use to decipher the new information[3]. Anderson laid stress on the constructive and dynamic role of schema in reading comprehension[12]. Schema or background information helps the reader comprehend the text easily. The concept of nativization supports the use of relevant schema in the text in order to improve the understanding Alptekin(2006) defines cultural nativization as " socoiological, semantic and pragmatic adaptation of the textual and contextual cues of the original story into reader's own culture, while keeping its linguistic and rhetorical content essentially intact"[13]. The process of indigenization or nativization brings that information into the structure of language that is the product of schematic knowledge or background knowledge of the learner. Above mentioned studies show the importance of background knowledge on reading comprehension of the learners of English.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Hypotheses
In order to ascertain the impact of nativized stories on reading comprehension the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The nativized stories have a positive impact on the reading comprehension of ESL learners at intermediate level at Dera Ghazi Khan.

H2: The nativized texts(stories) have positive effect on the literal reading comprehension of ESL learners at intermediate level at Dera Ghazi Khan.

H3: The nativized stories have positive effect on the inferential reading comprehension of ESL learners at intermediate.

Population and Sampling
From the target population a sample of one hundred ESL learners was taken for the purpose of the study. The number of male learners was 50 while 50 female learners participated in the study. All these students were the students of first year at intermediate level and their age range ran between 16 to 18. The proficiency level of the learners was determined through various methods. First of all their previous scores in the subject of English language were taken into account. They were also administered a pretest to check their proficiency in reading comprehension. They were also asked to note down their reading time of the particular reading passage. After completing the reading of the passage, the students were required to undergo a reading comprehension test based on MCQ's. The learners' proficiency was determined through their reading speed plus their reading comprehension score. After completing the pre-test the students were randomly assigned into two groups. Each group comprised fifty ESL learners. For the sake of study one group was taken as the experimental group while the other group was taken as the control group. The number of participants in each group was 50. The experimental group was taught through nativized or indiginized version of English or American stories (see Appendices). On the other hand the controlled group was instructed through the original

version of these stories from their intermediate 1st year text book. ELT material selected for the purpose of the study was based on intermediate textbook for 1st year students. The rationale behind the choice of this book was that the book contained short stories. As we know there is great amount of contextual and textual cues available in short stories that can be exploited for the nativization technique. The study was based on three selected short stories from the textbook of intermediate (1st year) class. Following Short stories were included in the study: 1: Button, Button 2: Clearing in the Sky 3: The author and the angel and others. For the sake of testing the reading comprehension two types of test (including multiple choices, true/false and ordering the events and short questions) were developed by the researchers. One test type used original stories for the formulation of comprehension questions, while the other used nativized or indigenized version of the stories for the formulation of the comprehension question. It was ensured that the questions were identical in the both type of test with one exception: the particular words or phrases that had connections with culture were duly indigenized and localized as was the case in stories. The stories included in the study were nativized (certain words and phrases were changed according to the local culture of the learner i.e. Pakistani. The process of nativization followed the concept of of nativization by Alptekin (2006   cited in Jalilifar & Aassi, 2008) was kept in view while modifying the original stories. Jalilifar & Assi (2008) advise that textual cues and contextual cues are to be identified before starting the process of nativization. For this purpose the researcher identified the textual and contextual cues from the three stories[13]. Textual cues refer to locations, settings and certain characters e.g. names of persons like Ali and Ahmed and the names of the places as Lahore, Karachi etc. On the other hand contextual cues according to Aleptkin represent 'culture-specific customs, rituals, notions, structures, and values.'Contextual cues also include food, currency, clothes, drinks, and institutions[1]. After the identification of the certain words their equivalents in the local culture were sought and included in the modified version of the stories. It was also ensured that linguistic features and rhetorical structures of the stories remain the same.

This practice provided the researcher that nativized material which was to be taught to the participants in the form of two versions of the same story _ one in native English while other using nativized version of English in this case Pakistani English. In the following tables the list of the words has been given that have been nativized or appropriated keeping in mind the 'textual and 'contextual cues' mentioned by Alptekin.No attempt has been made to simplify the language of the stories as that thing might have affected the results. Only those items of the vocabulary and syntax have been dealt with which come under the circumference of the Alptekin's concept of nativization.

RESULTS
The data gathered through test yielded the following results:

Table 1: Independent t-test for general reading comprehension

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig(two tailed)
Nativized	50	25.36	7.85	3.052	98	.0029
Original	50	21.18	5.71			

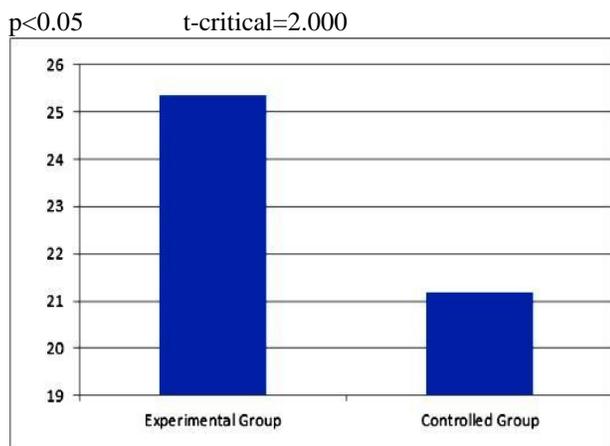$p < 0.05$ t-critical=2.000

Fig 1: Means of Two Groups (Experimental and Controlled

The data in the table 1 show that the observed value (3.052) is much higher than the critical value (2.000). The data show the significant difference (Sig: .0029) at 5% level. This thing suggests that the difference between the two groups is significant. The result entails that the indigenization or nativization of the reading text has very positive impact on learner's comprehension of the reading text (short stories). The statistical test also suggests that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant. The figure 1 also shows the difference between the mean scores of the two groups.

The data in the table 2 shows that observed value (3.389) is much higher than the critical value (2.000). The data shows the significant difference (Sig: .001) at 5% level.This thing suggests that the difference between the two groups is significant. The results show that the impact of nativization is quite significant on the literal comprehension of the learners. The data regarding the effect of the nativization techniques on the literal comprehension of the learner yielded results which gave higher level of significance. The reason for this higher level of significance may be the nativization of the different vocabulary items specially the proper nouns.
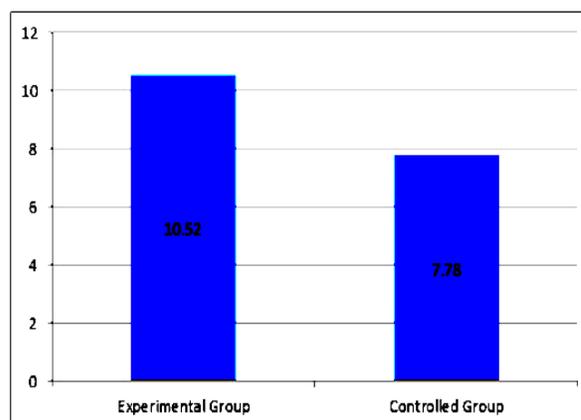

By nativizing the proper nouns, the researcher have lessened the frequency of such words as my have unfamiliar spellings and are difficult to pronounce. When this thing was removed, the learner was much attentive towards other textual cues and lexical items which contained the gist of the story.

Fig 2 : Means of Two groups (Literal Comprehension)
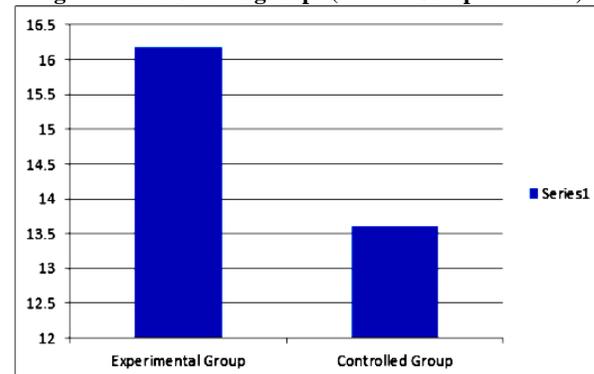

Figure 3:Means of Two groups (Inferential Comprehension)

Table 2: Independent t-test on Literal Comprehension

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig(two tailed)
Nativized	50	16.18	4.48	3.389	98	.001
Original	50	13.6	4.13			

$p < 0.05$ t-critical=2.000

Table 3: Independent t test on Inferential Reading Comprehension

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig(two tailed)
Nativized	50	10.52	2.82	5.100	98	1.68
Original	50	7.78	2.74			

p<0.05   t-critical=2.000

The difference between the mean scores of the two groups is shown in the following fig 3:

The data in the table .3 shows that observed value (1.69) is much lower than observed value(5.100). The data shows the significant difference (Sig: .001) at 5% level This thing also suggests that the difference of scores between the two Groups(i.e. control group and nativized group) is insignificant.   The results   show   that   the impact of nativization is   not   significant   on   the inferential comprehension of the learners. The reason might be the less emphasis on inferential reading comprehension in Pakistan.   This result differs from Jalilifar And Assi's findings   which   significant   impact   on   inferential Comprehension[13].

DISCUSSION

The data based on a reading comprehension test yielded the results that the students who read the nativized stories produced better results than the students who read the original short stories. The researcher contends that this better performance was caused due to the following factors which contributed to the better understanding of the text of the learners belonging to the nativized or experimental group: (a) Familiar   cultural   context   (b) Activation   of the appropriate Cultural schema (c) Less cognitive load (d) Motivational factors.

 Familiar cultural context is expressed through familiar settings .The reader finds the text so much akin to his background   knowledge. Taloon (2006)   refers   to   the psychological ease that helps in comprehension when the reader efficiently recognizes the setting mentioned in the reading text. The text in the nativized stories took the learners from the unfamiliar and foreign places of British or American society to the familiar and indigenous places. From the world of 'subways,   broilers,   apartments,   avenues,   streets and clearings, the learner was taken into the known world of bus stations, freezers, houses, roads and farms. The first story 'Button, Button' is set in the city of New York where the characters are living in an apartment. Our participants who   are   the   learners   of   intermediate   part   one belonging to D.G.Khan region usually have no experience of living in apartments and their familiarity with the city life of New York is quite less. The learners have no familiarity with the objects like *broiler* and *subway.*   The researchers contend that the short stories based on original text contained such material as was culturally unfamiliar for the learners. So due to lack of relevant cultural familiarity, the learners found it difficult to comprehend the text. The content of the stories contained certain details as were beyond the socio-cultural experience of the

learners. Nativization creates a sense of cultural intimacy between readers and their imagined persons because these persons seem more compatible with the readers' own culture[13].

In the case of the first story, the learner came across with three characters, two of them were husband and wife while the third one was an agent who tried to engage the husband and wife into a hazardous project which ultimately disturbed and changed the life of the characters. One important aspect for the comprehension of the stories is that the reader should identify the characters with him/herself. An emotional engagement with the characters will enhance the interest of the reader   and   ultimately   will   result   into   better comprehension of the story. This emotional enagement was provided to Pakistani reader by changing the foreign characters   into   indigenous   Pakistani   characters. Jalilifar & Assi (2008) observed in their research 'that the 'nativized stories enable readers to activate their appropriate schemata more efficiently than the original stories do' (p.69). they further add that 'the familiarity with the setting can trigger activation of the schemata about the incidents taking place in the setting.' (p. 70).There is a strong possibility that modification of the different textual and contextual cues would have resulted into activation of cultural schema which further contributed in the process of better comprehension of the stories. As the students did not have to remember unfamiliar details, their concentration on the thematic content might have increased which gave better understanding. In the culturally familiar version, where the text was nativized, the students seemed to find it easier to allocate attentional resources to   more   linguistic   elements   and   construct   mental representations of the familiar context [3].The words (as listed in tables given in appendices) put less pressure on the working memory of the students as they are from the immediate environment of the learner. The familiarization of the names of people and places in the short story contributed to activation of familiar cultural schema in the minds of the readers[15,1].   The nativized names   of   the   characters according to Pakistani names would have created 'a sense of cultural intimacy between readers and their imagined persons because these persons seem more compatible with the readers' own culture.' [13] .

Replacement of familiar contexts with unfamiliar ones allows students easier access to the information and gives them something to talk and write. Similar observations have been made by Thi Cam Le (2005) and MacDough & Shaw (2003) about the efficacy of culturally familiar content in enhancing the interest and motivation of the ESL learners [16,17].   In the second story the flora and fauna belong to unfamiliar context. The mention of *hickories, fox-squirrels, alfalfa* causes a great deal of confusion and mostly students are unable to create a mental picture of these things in their mind.   This   situation   may   create   certain   gaps   in

comprehension of the text. On the other hand the mention of familiar trees and animals makes the learner feel that the story is about his surroundings and his level of interest may have enhanced sufficiently enabling him to picture the familiar objects from his mental schema. The links present in the story and familiar objects would have a facilitative impact on learner's comprehension ability.

The third story depicts a scene in which the main character is engaged in conversation with the recording angel and is talking about the good deeds he did during the time of Christmas. The situations and events are mostly unfamiliar to the students of our region as they are specifically related to the culture and environment of the writer. The writer's style is so witty and invites a great deal of involvement on the part of the reader to comprehend the humour embedded in the text. Ayyappa (1997) maintains that "humour is often said to be culture-specific and language-bound, and resists translations or transferred to another region or language culture"[18]. So the researcher suggests that text demands too much from the learners regarding comprehension. The reader has not only to imbibe the elusive humour of the text but also interpret the cultural symbols depicted in the text. Realizing this fact of nativized humour, the researcher changed the event and situations most relevant to the learner's existing cultural schema. The close study of the text revealed that the situation and event to a great extent resembled to our region's religious event Ramadan. The sense of generosity in Ramadan is quite similar to the sense of charity in Christmas time. The reader would quite easily interpret the situation through the familiar textual and contextual cues. The number of lexical items adapted and indigenized according to Pakistani situation would have made the text rather easier to comprehend. The reader's attention would have pinned on the lexico-syntactic structure of the story and the process of decodification of the text would have become simple. The lesser cognitive load on the working memory of the students can help in the proper understanding of the text. Results of this research verify the significant effects of cultural schema on inference and reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The results revealed that nativization of the text can have significant effect on the comprehension of the text. It also showed that nativization has positive effect on literal comprehension of the reader. The results also indicated no significance in regard to inferential comprehension. The reason might be the neglect of inferential reading in Pakistani language classrooms where only literal comprehension is emphasized. This research establishes a strong relationship between familiar setting and reading comprehension. In second language learning there exist some psychological and cognitive barriers that impedes the learning process. When L2 learner finds a familiar setting in L2 text he/she is in a better position to overcome these barriers. It is recommended that ESL text books of English should adapt the texts through nativization technique in order to improve the readers' understanding of the text he or she is going to read.

REFERENCES

1 Alptekin, C. "Cultural familiarity in inferential and literal comprehension in L2 reading."*System,* **34**(4):494–508(2006).

2 Erten, İ. H. and Karakaş, M. "Understanding the divergent influences of reading activities on the comprehension of short stories." *The Reading Matrix*, 7 (3):113–133(2007).

3 Erten, I.H. and Razi, S. "The effects of cultural familiarity on reading comprehension." *Reading in a Foreign Language,* **21**(1):60-77(2009).

4 Waseem,F., and Jibeen, T. "Anxiety amongst learners of English as second language: An Examination of Motivational Patterns in Pakistani Context."*International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*,**3** (16): 174-184(2013).

5 Mansoor, S. (2002). "Culture and Teaching of English as a Second Language For Pakistani Students."Online at < http://www.melta.org.my/ET/2002/wp04.htm>.[Accessed 04.03.2007].

6 Warsi, J. Conditions under which English is taught in Pakistan: An Applied Linguistic Perspective. *SARID Journal* ,**1**(1):1-9(2004).

7 Rustam, R. Global Perspective of Teaching English Literature in Higher Education in Pakistan. *In (* MPhil dissertation,University of modern science and technology). (2010).

8 Johnson, P. "Effects on reading comprehension of language complexity and cultural background of a text." *TESOL Quarterly*, **15**, 169–181(1981).

9 Alptekin, C. "Target- Language Culture in EFL Materials." *ELT Journal,***47**(2):136-143(1993).

10   Tomlinson, B.).Materials development in language teaching. Cambridge: CUP. (1998).

11Tennent, W. Understanding reading comprehension: Processes and practices. London: SAGE Publications. (2015).

12 Anderson,R.C. The notion of schema and the educational interprize. In R.C Anderson, R.J Spiral & W.W Montague (Eds.) *Schooling and acquisition of knowledge*. Hillside N.J: Lawrence Erbaum Association. (1977).

13 Jalilifar A. R. & Assi, R. "The Role of Cultural Nativization in Comprehension of Short Stories in EFL Reading Contexts." *The International Journal of Language Society and Culture*, **26**: 62-79 (2008).

14 Taloon, M. Narrative: A critical linguistic introduction (2nd ed.). London: Routledge. (2006). 15Ozyaka, S. G. The significance of cultural content in EFL reading comprehension: The role of schemata. In (Unpublished master's thesis,Ege Uni-versity).(2001).

16 Thi Cam Le, Nguyen Passive Participant to Active Thinker: A Learner-Centered Approach to Materials Development. *The English Teaching Forum Online*. **43**(3): (2005).

17 McDonough, J., & Shaw, C. Materials and methods in ELT: A teacher's guide. Oxford: Blackwell. (2007).

18 Ayyappa, P. K. Surveys and selections: [Assamese, Bengali, Dogri]. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi. (1997).

19 MacKay, S.L. Teaching English as an international language : rethinking goals and approaches. Oxford: Oxford University Press. .(2002).

Appendix 1
Textual and Contextual Cues In Button, Button

Original Version	Indigenized(nativized) Version
1. Arthur	1.Akhtar
2.Mr.Lewis	2.Mr.Akhtar
3. Norma	3.Najma
4.Mrs.Lewis	4.Mrs.Akhtar
5.Mr.Steward	5. Mr.Saeed
6. New York	6. Karachi
7. Thirty Seventh Street	7. Tariq Road
8. Broiler	8. freezer/ oven
9. Cottage on Island	9. flat in Clifton
10. Elevator	10. Lift
11. Pancake	11. Cake
12.Waste basket	12. Dust bin
13.LeenoxHill Hospital	13. General Hospital
14. Sub-way accident	14. Train accident
15. Pennsylvania	15. Peshawar
16. Scotch-taped	16. Taped

Appendix 2

Original Version	Indigenized (Nativized) Version
1. Vexing	1.Disturbing
2. Christmas	2.Eid
3. London	3. Lahore
4. Christmas	4. Ramadan
5. Nightshirt	5. Sleeping suit
6. Fur	6. Cotton suit
7. Bovril	7. Milk
8. Street Arab	8. Poor beggar
9. Squire	9.Chaudary
10. Plum pudding	10.Kheer
11. Jotting down	11. Noting down
12. My five shillings	12. My ten rupees
13. Daily Telegraph's sixpeny fund	13. Daily The Nation's Ten rupee Fund
14. TalbotChampneys	14. King Akbar
15. Our boys	15.Anarkali
16. Poor Curates	16. PoorMaulvis
17. Morning Post	17. Dawn
18. Rummage Sale	18. Loot sale
19. Raffle	19. Lottery ticket
20. Monster show at His Majesty's Fund for destitute British in Johannesburg	20. Great Show at Prime minister's Fund for the people of Swat

Appendix 3
Textual and contextual cues in " The Author and Angel and others"

Original Version	Indigenized (Nativized) Version
1. Clearing in the Sky	1. Farm on the mountain
2. Jess	2. Ali
3. It was 97 in the shade.	3. It was 40 Centigrade in the shade.
4. He didn't care if it was 40C in the shade or -10.	4. He didn't care if it was 40C in the shade or -10.
5. alfalfa	5. grass
6. Little Sandy River	6. Sind
7. fox squirrels	7. rabbits
8. Rags and Scout	8. RajuandKaloo
9. Hickory Tree	9. Wall-nut tree
10. Bluff	10. Rock
11. Dad	11. Baba
12. The Bible	12. Allah
13. Three score years and ten	13. Seventy years
14. barrel of corn to the shock	14. sacks of wheat to store
15. Black-gum tree	15. Neem

Textual and Contextual Cues In " Clearing in the Sky" (A Farm on the Mountain)