

Good scientific writing

Recently, V. Sarma¹ had claimed that Indian university teaching at the Bachelor's and Master's levels lacks a course on research paper writing in English. No one would disagree that writing is an important aspect of science, since no report would be published unless it is well written. This problem may be seen not only in students' theses at any level, but also in scientific papers submitted to professional journals. Often such papers are unacceptable in terms of language and presentation. I agree with Sarma that the main reason for this is lack of appropriate education in this regard.

However, I would like to point out one additional aspect. It is not enough to

teach students how to present tables and graphs, and how to cite others' works to avoid plagiarism. Young researchers are seldom aware that the quality of their papers depends on how they are written, and not only on the quality of the results presented therein. They do not know how to compose a section, paragraph or sentence to result in a good piece of writing; grammar and style are often neglected. My point is that such aspects should also gain special attention in teaching.

India is not the only country that encounters this problem. We have it in Poland too. Hence every student, especially at the Master's and doctorate levels, whichever country he/she comes from

and studies in, should be taught how to write clearly and comprehensibly in English. Without this, young researchers will usually not be able to compose a good piece of scientific writing.

1. Sarma, V., *Curr. Sci.*, 2007, **92**, 1029.

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Increasing vegetable production

Vegetables play an important role in the diet, especially in a country like India with its varied, tasty and wholesome cuisines and the large population of vegetarians, whose main source of proteins comes from legumes (pulses and beans), dairy products and foodgrains.

At a campsite run by a Mumbai-based NGO at Lake Nilshi near Lonavalla (Maharashtra), one of the authors (J.E.J.), whose hobby includes gardening, noticed a fence that could also serve as a support for climbing vegetables, such as climbing beans and other legumes, bitter gourd, snake gourd, cucumber, ridge gourd, etc. A project is being initiated to plant these vegetables along the fence (2 km long), as it is relatively free of other vegetation, and will serve as a support for the vegetables. About eight plants will be planted per metre. Planting is done in May, before the first rains and harvesting is done through June–September. As a point of interest this does not require any additional

land, as it is confined to the fencing border. Apart from the monsoon rainfall, no additional irrigation is necessary, and no manure or fertilizer is added, apart from the compost that is already in the soil. This will be a matter of interest to farmers from neighbouring villages. They would do something similar along the east-west borders of their fields, where the shadow does not fall on the field itself, and use bamboo and coir as a support system.

When one considers regions in India where this could be adopted, by planting climbing vegetables preferably along the east-west borders of the fields, it is of interest to estimate what the total yield would be.

Assuming that this is applicable to 10% of India's area (about 328,800 sq. km), in fields 50 m × 20 m each (50 m in east-west direction), with eight plants per metre, along the east-west border, if the yield per plant is 1 kg of vegetables, then the 'guestimated' yield would be 328,800 ×

1000 (fields/sq. km) × 50 × 8 × 1 kg = 132 million tonnes.

This works out to 343 g of vegetables per person per day, for a population of 1.05 billion people, which would be a good amount of vegetables for India.

Such an approach for increasing vegetable production would benefit many farmers in India, without requiring additional land. Importantly, this would strengthen the rural economy, improve nutrition and health, increase the well-being of the farmers, and may be extended to other countries in Asia.

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