

Appendix 5
LANGUAGE TEACHING
Notes for Discussion

Alethea D'Rozario, Eklavya Bhopal, 04 August 2007

What is LANGUAGE?

- (elicit responses from teachers)
- Giving a perspective
- Chinese Whispers (activity)
- basic skills required – Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing

Modern trends in language teaching

- traditional vs CLT
- not perfection of content but expression of thought
- moving from familiar to unfamiliar
- using environment for motivation of teacher & learner
- creating situations conducive to LT when existing ones not favourable (give examples)
- use of conversation, role play, story telling, poetry, games as tools
- the power of guided questioning (inference of meaning through probing questions)

Listening Skill	* Basic listening skill for primary level
	* Familiarisation with kinds of listening activities
Speaking Skill	* Oral skills (implications)
	* Accepted techniques in teaching oral skills
Reading Skill	* The reading process
	* The role of reading for meaning through demonstration (Keshav's story)
Writing Skill	* Process of writing. Why it is needed.
	* Teaching writing skills

Some useful tips

Sharing significant teaching experiences, problems etc.

Questions

Welcome

We will try to give you a perspective of language teaching today, with the focus on teaching English in the classroom, through your own first-hand experience. We shall together explore how the curriculum can be translated into a meaningful and fulfilling experience. It is our hope that you will go away with a lot of fresh ideas and the willingness to practise them as you realize that it is a workable model, even with the time constraints and the syllabus to be covered. To be able to teach a language, it is very important that one is confident of using it oneself first. We teach on the basis of what we learnt earlier and therefore we sometimes feel threatened in the changing world. Once we are able to develop ourselves and understand what language teaching is about in today's world, we will naturally feel confident of facilitating our students in it.

What is language? (Get responses from teachers and note them down on the board).

Why did language originate? (Get responses from teachers and record them on the board).

Yes, so then we can say that language is (summarize the outcome of the question).

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1989 language is defined as a **System of sounds, words, patterns, etcetera used by humans to communicate thoughts and feelings.**'

There are several definitions for language and how it originated, but it is clear from all of them and from our discussion that it is a big puzzle as to how language began. But why language began is rather clear. Language must have evolved because humans needed it for the following purposes:

- .
 - * To convey factual information and to give commands.
 - * To express emotions and feelings.
 - * To maintain social contact on a friendly level.
 - * For aesthetic reasons like poetry.

Communication is the most important function of language. Therefore, the nature of teaching-learning of any language in the world will always be deeply connected to the **need** or **motivations** of the learners to acquire that language. For example, a child who has Hindi as her/his mother tongue may learn English because it is a compulsory part of her/his school curriculum. Or a street seller, selling his products may pick up enough English to sell his goods to foreign tourists or any other language spoken by different communities in the region with the sole purpose of achieving his goal of selling his goods.

Language is a means of discovery: discovery of the self and the world around us. The driving force behind learning a language is the human urge to express one's thoughts and desires or share them with others .

Quite obviously, **communication** is possibly the **most important function of language** but it is not the only function of language. Language is used for thought, problem- solving, play, dreaming, displays of group solidarity, deception, certain specialized literary modes such as represented speech and possibly to fulfill an instinctive need for symbolic behaviour.

As language teachers, it is important for us to remember the natural functions of language, and to ensure that this functionality remains intact in formal language learning situations, like the school. For this, opportunities to 'communicate' or 'use' the language must form the core of any language learning programme. Because of this, the teaching of languages in India is increasingly focusing on 'skills' in its attempts to make the learners acquire the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – to enable them to become an effective and autonomous communicator. As English language teachers, we have to be always conscious of this point and must always communicate in English and get responses in English, because the learners get little exposure to it in natural environment. Outside the school, Hindi, and not English, is the spoken language in their homes and anywhere else. The school provides the only practice that the learners get and it is our duty to see that they get it.

Basic Skills Required

CHINESE WHISPERS: Experiment to demonstrate Basic Skills and the role it plays vis-à-vis interpretation.

Divide the teachers into 4 groups of 5 each.

Ask them to sit in circles.

Choose a person in the group to start/lead the game.

Now let the starter/leader think of a sentence and then whisper the sentence into the next person's ear. This process goes on till the whisper reaches the last person of the group.

Care should be taken that only the person whose ear is being whispered into should hear the sentence.

No repetition of the sentence should be made.

After all have had their chance, the last person in the group stands up and repeats what she/he heard.

The first person in that group is then asked to repeat the correct sentence with which the whispering began.

The last two steps are repeated with all the groups.

The following questions are then posed to all:

What do you think happened in the game just played?

.....

What skills were involved in this process?

.....

Yes, so we see that first a thought was formed, and then it was expressed/articulated, listened to, replicated or repeated. What we heard or listened to was very important in our interpretation of the text.

Secondly, we need the skills of thinking, listening and speaking, which then lead to reading and writing. For the acquisition of language, we need to develop in the learners the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

When we listen to sounds and how they are arranged into words, we try to copy them or replicate them so that we can be understood; thus we have speech. Once we speak, we need to broaden our scope of action by reading to gain information and lastly we need to express ourselves through writing.

Modern Trends In Language Teaching

(A reader's/listener's prior experiences with life, language and literature) The meanings a reader constructs in relation to a text (The vocabulary ideas, syntax and form of a TEXT)



Now that we have understood the dynamics of communication and our role in the process, we can appreciate the fact that we as language teachers need to create a good learning environment in the given time constraints and the given curriculum. Always remember that these two compulsions always exist, and while we cannot change the syllabus, what we do as transactors of that syllabus is entirely upto us as

classroom managers. We have to be resourceful, creative and supportive communicators rather than dictatorial and boring lecturers. I'm sure that everybody remembers how we were taught languages - the good 'ole guru with the ruler (scale) walking up and down, making us repeat copious texts and delivering lecture upon lecture. This is the traditional model of language teaching. Modern trends demand that as language is a communication tool, we have to facilitate the process of language teaching so that the learners can articulate their emotions, thoughts and ideas. We have to make our learners understand that language is not just another subject (unimportant one at that, as opposed to Maths and Science) but a very, very important medium to understand all the other subjects. . If we are unable to express ourselves clearly, we will never achieve good results, because though we may know all the correct answers, we won't be able to communicate them correctly. Therefore, in modern times, there has been a definite shift from perfection of content, grammar structures, etcetera to an accurate expression of thoughts, emotions and ideas.

Now, all this sounds very good, but how do we go about this process as teachers?

If we can associate ourselves with something, it is always easier to understand or comprehend it. So, we always move from familiar things to the unfamiliar things. In this way, the learner is at ease and can form her/his associations, arrange patterns and thus be in a better position to use them effectively. Using the environment for motivation of the teacher and the learner – use examples from a learner's daily life to illustrate or draw on concepts that are to be taught would make it easier for the teacher to explain things as well as easier for the student to grasp them. Another very important strategy in language teaching is to create situations which help language teaching when existing ones are not favourable. For example, in a classroom, we come across different types of students. We have some who always love to hear their own voices, some who need a lot of persuasion to respond and some who are content to be passive spectators. When it comes to language, those in the last category are mostly content to just sit through the period, or use it to complete science or math work by taking a back seat. You can't force them into any response. My first experience of teaching English in a non-English environment was really frustrating. Here was I, coming from a family of teachers, loving children and just waiting to share myself with them, but five minutes in the classroom was enough to make me forget that I wanted to be a teacher. I tried all the tricks in the book to get a response from them, but all they did was to continue to be dumb or just give one-word answers. I suddenly thought that I had to be in control of the situation and had to reach them some way or the other. I just announced that all those seated in the class were to form a line and go down to the principal's office. It was a trick but if my purpose was served so what! Immediately every student in the class responded albeit in broken English. I then asked them to sit down and informed them that my purpose had been served. I really didn't want them to go down to the principal's office but I wanted to see if they really couldn't communicate. I proved that if they were passionate about something, nothing was impossible, and it was this passion I wanted to see for not only acquiring the language but for getting to a position where they could play around with the language to their benefit. In my teaching career till that time, I had always avoided using Hindi to explain the special meanings of certain words or ideas mainly because I did not converse well in Hindi. I now decided that if I wanted certain things from my learners, I had better start practicing them myself. So, with my broken Hindi, I tried to get across certain finer points of the language. When they laughed, I emphasized the fact that I had been successful in conveying the meaning to them and that was what really mattered. I had made the attempt successfully, because the question was not the perfection of my expression in but to make them understand something. Perfection came from repeated practice. They were also learners and nobody was there to laugh at others, as no one was perfect. Creating such atmosphere for the language class always works in my experience. I am surprised to meet students, who earlier couldn't speak two words together, fluently carrying on a conversation, and when I lapse into Hindi, they reply in English.

In a language class, the lessons have been found to achieve their goals most effectively when tools like role-playing or acting out parts, all forms of story-telling, poetry, games and probing questions are used. In the course of the next language session, we shall attempt to demonstrate some of them to you.

Familiarisation with kinds of listening activities

1. **Sound / Word drills:**
 - Repetition of alphabet sounds
 - Repetition of words with similar vowel / consonant sounds
 - Recognizing the sounds / sound patterns
2. **Worksheets :**
 - Word lists with different spoken sounds to be underlined
 - Sentences with similar sounding words to be ticked according to what is heard
3. **Minimum or Non-Verbal Response :**
 - The teacher may tell a story giving practice to learners in extensive listening where they listen to large chunks of spoken language.
 - The teacher may use a set of pictures that illustrate different parts of the story, asking learners to put them in a sequential order.
4. **Dictation :**
 - Traditional dictation
 - The teacher dictates several alphabets / words very quickly. Students are generally unable to catch all the words. They are then asked to pool in the alphabets / words they have written. The complete list is then used to form words / write down a story.
5. **Listening & Following :**
 - A route map is used and exercises are designed to link the description with the map

A Route . The teacher gives the learners instructions, adding comments and a brief description. A map of a place they would like to visit as part of a class trip or a map of the surroundings of the school can be given. In this way a real life context is introduced and the activity becomes more interesting. Students have to just mark out the spoken route on the map or follow the given instructions.
6. **Jigsaw Listening :**
 - The teacher divides the class into groups. She tells each group a part of the story. Next a member from each group goes to another group and that group questions the member who in turn has to give the required information. The various groups thus collect the missing sequences of the story. Now, in their original groups, they are told to speculate on the last part of the story.
 - For Class I and II learners, different groups could be given different sounds whose alphabets they had to guess . Then a member from one group could go to another group and repeat the sounds. In this way, they will acquire different alphabets, and when back in their original group, they would have to piece out a word into its alphabets.

The listening material should have a realistic context which should be interesting and challenging for the learner. The passage should not be a written text spoken aloud but be modelled on conversational speech. The material should facilitate understanding rather than blocking it. Listening activities are aimed at giving practice to learners in areas which pose problems for them. Therefore, it is important that the learners feel involved in doing the activity. If the listening passage or material is too long it will not be able to sustain their interest and concentration.

Speaking Skill

The language of speech is not 'spoken writing'. In oral communication, we must not 'speak like a book'. In speech, the kind of vocabulary, the structure of the sentence and its complexity vary greatly from what would be required in writing.

While speaking, the speaker has to plan, organize the message and also control the language. Repetition and changes in vocabulary and message take place.

The reciprocity of the act of speech necessitates that in order to maintain the flow of speech, the speaker must take notice of the listener, and give her/him the chance to speak. It requires the speaker to take turns at speech, and also to adjust, adapt, vary the degree of formality employed according to need.

Accepted techniques in teaching oral skills

1. **Conversation Class** : -The teacher sits with a group of learners and asks them questions about their home, family, school, etcetera.
2. **Topic Based Discussion Class** : -Story-telling or narration of events or things that the particular age group finds interesting; aiming at a fluency-based activity.
-Teachers must bear in mind that learners need a reason to speak more than a topic to speak about.
-Care should be taken by the teacher to involve all the students keeping in mind a forty-minute period. The discussion must not be monopolized by the brighter students.
3. **Task Centred Activity** -A group is given a task to perform through verbal interaction. It may be in the form of group activity or role play. The group has to perform a task which has a tangible output either in the form of giving a group report, a speech or presentation. The group thus has a concrete task to work with and clear guidelines regarding its scope. A basis for feedback is also provided for in this activity. This type of activity is especially suitable for Communicative Language Teaching.

The Reading Process

In considering the reading process, first we have to distinguish between two quite separate activities : **reading for meaning** (silent reading) and **reading aloud**. Think of your own experience both as a student and a teacher. In many classrooms, the reading lesson is used as an opportunity to teach pronunciation and encourage 'expression speaking', i.e. speaking with feeling and emotion. For early readers, reading aloud is an important aid; beginners have to discover how reading is associated with the spoken words they have already learnt to use, and also how it is different from them. But the early reading stage does not last long – generally, two or three years at the most.

Reading aloud involves looking at a text, understanding it, and also saying it. It is a much more difficult activity than reading silently because our attention is divided between reading and speaking.

Reading for meaning is the activity we usually engage in when we read books, newspapers, road signs, posters, etcetera. It involves looking at sentences in a text and understanding the message they convey. In other words, 'making sense of' a written text. It does not normally involve saying the words we read, not even silently inside our heads.

At the earliest stages of learning to read, children must learn to distinguish among visual symbols and acquire a 'sight word' vocabulary, a repertoire of words that they recognize and find meaningful on sight without a complicated analysis. This will help young children gain control over the written symbols of

language so that they can understand texts later on. Therefore, it will be useful to give children practice in recognizing words outside their school books.

Word Cards and word walls or encouraging children to build up their own dictionary are good aids to help children read; the activity should focus on reading and not memorizing or on speaking. Word cards can also be used to give practice in reading whole sentences.

Besides these activities, there are many other ways of checking the children's understanding and giving them a reason to read. For example, you can ask them to match sentences with pictures, match halves of sentences together, or draw pictures from sentences. These are some simple reading tasks.

The role of reading for meaning through demonstration (Keshav's story)

The meaning of the text does not just lie in it, rather the receiver has to be actively involved in getting the meaning out of the text.

To demonstrate this point, let us take Keshav's story. Read the sentences and answer the questions immediately after it.

1. KESHAV WAS ON HIS WAY TO SCHOOL LAST WEDNESDAY.

Q. Who was Keshav? How did you arrive at this conclusion?

2. HE WAS REALLY WORRIED ABOUT THE ENGLISH LESSON.

Q. Who was Keshav? How have you changed your view about Keshav / or Have you not? Why?

3. LAST WEEK HE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO CONTROL THE CLASS.

Q. Are you sure you know who Keshav was? On which part of the text is this inference based? What kind of prior knowledge helps in the inference?

4. IT WAS UNFAIR OF THE ENGLISH TEACHER TO LEAVE HIM IN CHARGE OF THE CLASS.

Q. What further changes in your inference have you made? Why?

5. AFTER ALL, IT WAS NOT A NORMAL PART OF A TYPIST'S DAY!

Q. Are you now clear in your mind about who Keshav was?

Process of writing.

The focus in language teaching has now shifted from 'product' to 'process'. What does this mean? How does this 'process' differ from 'product'?

When we look at writing as a 'product', we are mainly interested in learning outcomes – we identify what the students have to produce, for example, grammatical accuracy, mechanics of writing, proper format, good organization, etcetera.

Recent research on writing has provided us with an important insight : good writers go through certain processes which lead to successful pieces of written work. They start off with an overall plan in their heads. They think about what they want to say and who they are writing for. They then draft out sections of the writing, and as they work on them, they are constantly reviewing, revising, and editing their work. It is considered useful to enable our learners to engage in this 'process' rather than worry about the 'product'. For, they should learn **how** to go about the process of writing, rather than **what** the end product should be. If the process is proper, the product will take care of itself.

The nine areas in which a writer needs some competence besides the ability to write correctly and choose appropriate words are : communication between people, suiting a specific subject, presenting them, constructing sentences, using paragraphs, using linking devices, writing in four main styles (narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative), achieving the desired degree of formality and creating the necessary emotional atmosphere.

Because each piece of writing has a different purpose, students need to practise the writing skills for a variety of purposes, for example, diary entries, letters, requests, offers, invitations and to help, apologise, persuade, etc.

Teaching writing skills

The two most important problems which students face when asked to write something are **what** to write and **how** to present one's thoughts. In other words, the **ideas** that can be used in a piece of writing, and the problems of organizing such ideas logically and coherently, using appropriate linking devices. There are also the problems of choosing the most appropriate style and achieving the desired degree of formality. As teachers, we can overcome these problems with a two-pronged strategy. First, we can use **controlled** and **guided** writing tasks before proceeding to **free writing**. Second, we can use **collaborative writing** techniques in the classroom.

In a controlled writing task – both the content and the expression are provided. For classes I and II the teacher can use pictures or a series of pictures to help the child. Classes III, IV and V may be given words, say words about one festival and as a class activity, a paragraph may be written on the board. Then each student may use the same writing plan to write on any other festival. Instruct your students not only to use the same organizational pattern but also the same sentence structures as far as they can. Thus the student is not at a loss for words/ideas that she/he needs to use, the chances of making too many errors are minimized and the student gets to practise certain composition skills systematically and gradually.

Other examples of controlled writing will be filling in blanks of a small passage where only one answer is possible.

From totally guided writing, your students can go to guided writing where you may provide a series of hints through questions – which each student would respond to separately.

Another example of a guided writing task can be to give the beginning and end of a story. Ask your students to write the middle.

In free writing, students are presented with a topic and are then free to write as they please. Though the goal of writing lessons is the ability to write freely and independently, unfortunately this produces many errors, which are frustrating to both the teacher and the student. In communicative approach, however, the teacher should be more interested in finding out if the student has achieved a reasonable communicative competence and therefore concentrate only on those errors that hinder communication in a set writing task. Writing in the classroom is no longer considered an individual activity to be attempted alone from the beginning to the end. In fact, the idea that many students can pool in the content, expressions, editing skills and self- correction strategies to produce a final piece of writing is becoming increasingly acceptable. Hence with a little time planning and management, teachers can use

collaborative writing techniques for collection of ideas, organizing ideas, development of first draft, editing of first draft and revising and finalizing the draft. Such group activities would definitely help students to write effectively and accurately.

Some Tips learnt through experience :

- Always help the child to establish a link between the symbol, the sound and the written letter / word.
- There should be no pressure to memorise copious word lists.
- Make every excuse to engage a child in conversation.
- Break away from the habit of reading for the sake of reading, and writing for the sake of writing, i.e. the child must try and make sense of what is read and written rather than blindly reproduce meaningless texts.
- The children must be taught in such a way that language skills are developed as this ensures the learning of other languages.
- Never make the mistake of translating, as the child will never start thinking in the target language.
- Do not forge a set of false associations in the child's mind, for example, A for apple, etc. as this process does not facilitate reading /writing.
- Use graphics, topics close to the child so that the child can easily build up associations and thus express accurately.

Note: This is the maximum information that can be given for such a short interaction. I don't propose to follow this ad verbitum but this is just a guideline so if any questions are raised, one is prepared to deal with them satisfactorily. The above is the shell of what I would like to do first. Later according to the time and the way things go and the pulse of the gathering I'll add or subtract content/activities. Will try and reach there at the earliest.

Alethea D'Rozario

Eklavya Annual Report 2007-8

Appendix 6

Jana Hrabovska's Reports

Report 1

27th July 2007

Teaching English to 4th-grade students at a private school

Jana is a student at the University of London, currently doing her BA in Hindi&Linguistics degree. She is a member of DHRI (Development and Human Rights Institute), an NGO based in Mumbai, the U.K. and the U.S.A. She was at the time undergoing internship at Eklavya and as part of it taught English to children at a private school.

School's name: Abhimanyu Little Angels' School

Status: private school

Location: Malakhedi, Hoshangabad District, Madhya Pradesh, India

Director: Vikram Chourey

Teachers: Vikram Chourey; Varsha Chouhan; Sarmika Yadav, Ajay Sharma

Students: Rupa; Shivani; Tarun; Bheem; Ajay; Rupesh; Himani; Preety (4 boys&4 girls)

Duration of each class: 1 hour, 10.30-11.30am Monday to Friday

In the reports, the teacher is referred to as "the teacher" or "T". The pupils are referred to as "the students" or "the children".

Evaluation of the class:

Children's knowledge of English is very limited. None of them is able to produce a whole correct sentence. Despite being in the 4th grade, they neither know nor use the basic grammar tools.

Until now children have been taught from *Marigold* textbook (published by NCERT). A separate evaluation of this textbook is attached to the overall report.

During the 1st lesson, the focus was on the correct use of the verb "*to be*". The explanation was in English as well as in Hindi. Children seemed to be missing the ability to differentiate between a singular and a plural. Simple examples were practised.

Examples:

I am a student.

She is a girl.

We are people.

He is a teacher.

Usage of articles was not explained at this stage. The focus was on recognizing a personal pronoun and its corresponding verb.

Problem:

Children took time to recognize that the sentence order in English is different from the sentence order in Hindi (S-V-O x S-O-V). Simple sentence and its structure were highlighted. An English sentence and its Hindi equivalent were compared. The comparison happened in the way that one simple sentence was written on the board in English as well as in Hindi. The words were looked at, separately translated and their position within the sentence was pointed out. Children could see that a verb follows the subject in an English sentence whereas in Hindi it is placed at the end of the sentence.

However, this is a fact that has to be shown and highlighted several times during the teaching so that students can really see the difference and make new sentences in the right order.

Nouns worked with:

student, teacher, people, mother, father, sister, brother, girl, boy

An exercise on filling blanks with appropriate nouns:

My father is ...

My mother is ...

My sister is ...

My brother is ...

Words filled in:

a teacher

a doctor

a housewife

a student

The same exercise was set as homework. Students were asked to fill the blanks with different words than those used in the classroom.

Throughout the class students were made to repeat the sentences with focus on their pronunciation. Repetition of words was widely used and interaction between them was also encouraged to make them realize that by using “she, he, we, I ...” they were talking about their friend, about their teacher and about themselves.

Report 2

30th July 2007

Only 7 children were present; Rupa will be missing until mid-August due to a death in the family.

Tarun did not bring his homework.

Plan for the class was not fulfilled as I realised that teaching English to those children will be fruitful but the speed has to be much lower than expected in order to bring results. Students should not be overloaded with information. A few new things can be introduced and worked on but care must be taken in how

much new information is being introduced. Children of the age of 8 to 9 years have no knowledge of basic grammar divisions and their names.

At the beginning of the class verb “*to be*” was practised again.

In-class work was writing in English from dictation. Simple things were dictated. First, all forms of the verb “*to be*” were dictated and then full sentences that had been previously practised.

There was already a visible difference and progress.

Students were divided into 3 groups based on their knowledge and approach.

Group 1 (Ajay; Rupesh)

Very bright; knowledge of English of a very basic level already acquired; very active and keen to learn.

Group 2 (Preeti; Bheem; Tarun)

Visible progress in learning; memorised words well presented; occasional mistakes; uncertainties.

Group 3 (Shivani; Himani)

Confused; very shy to speak but keen to learn though having difficulties in applying their knowledge and in connecting the meanings.

In-class exercise is included in Report 3, as in class 3 mistakes will be addressed and grammar will be practised again.

Report 3

31st July 2007

The in-class exercise, which was worked on in class 2, was again focused on in class 3.

First basic repetition was exercised by simply translating from Hindi to English – repetition by “drilling” was used.

Students were shown their mistakes in the in-class exercise. They were then asked to turn the page and take down dictation of the same verb “*to be*” forms without looking. (Children always try to cheat; if they look promptly at the other side, let them do it and do not let them know that you saw them doing so, as this little cheating will only help them to remember the words.)

At this stage children showed an improvement and only occasional mistakes happened. Compared to their performance the day before, it was a success. They were praised by me and encouraged.

Students were given a copy of a few exercises written by myself. A copy is attached to Report 3 for demonstration.

Part 1 again includes a practice of the verb “*to be*”, students finished this exercise quite quickly and very well. This is only due to drilling the same thing to them over and over again although always approached from different angles so that they do not get bored.

Part 2 is fairly difficult but important. There are 5 questions in it, 2 of which were mentioned in Class 2.

The teacher went through each question with the students and also translated all of them into Hindi.

Then questions were read out loud, every student had the opportunity to read and answer the question. After their understanding all the questions and possible answers, I kept on throwing these questions at the students. They were allowed to think and to take their time to be able to answer the questions correctly.

“Who” and “how” seemed to be mixed in their understanding so these two words were separately focused on and drilled.

Students were asked to study these questions and their possible answers at home. Next class will start with questions being thrown at the students again.

Part 3 and Part 4 of the exercise will be dealt with accordingly during the next class.

Report 4

1st August 2007

Two students missing (Rupa, Tarun)

To start off the class basic questions mentioned in Report 3 were asked. Students showed a good ability to react and to answer these questions well.

The vocabulary on the photocopy from the in-class exercise of class 3 was practised. Words were written on the board by the students, mistakes were corrected. If a student made a mistake in spelling, s/he was asked to write it again. Looking at their notes was encouraged.

Students were given a sheet of paper each. The teacher dictated the words “student; teacher; mother; father” and expressions “I am a student.; My mother is a teacher.; My father is a doctor.”

These sheets of paper with the students’ attempts on are enclosed with this report.

Students again made several mistakes. Then every student gave his/her paper to another student. They were now in the role of a teacher. They corrected their friends’ mistakes. They enjoyed doing this very much. After this, they were told to look at the words again for a minute.

Then after a minute they were asked to turn their papers up and the teacher dictated the same words and expressions again. Fewer mistakes occurred this time.

Exercise 3 was worked on. Putting words together in order to create a sentence proved to be very difficult. Students had no idea how to do it.

After translating every single word into Hindi with teacher’s help, their attempts became satisfactory. Both sentences were written on the board and read aloud; students repeated them.

These sentences and their syntax structure will be looked upon in class 5 again. Students were asked to rewrite these two sentences at home.

Report 5

2nd August 2007

At the beginning of the class, the two sentences from exercise 3 were again written on the board by the students. Their pronunciation was practised.

Personal pronouns were written on the board and their meanings translated by the students. Next to the personal pronouns, possessive pronouns were written down. These personal & possessive pronouns were closely looked at and their meanings again translated into Hindi. Their pronunciation was drilled.

Then children were asked to write down dictated words (pronouns). Pronouns were dictated by the teacher in Hindi and the children were asked to write them down in English. Only few mistakes occurred.

Then all possessive pronouns were written on the board. Children were also asked to come to the board and write down the pronouns themselves.

At the end of the class a poem “Humpty Dumpty” was written on the board, read aloud, rewritten by the children and the pronunciation was focused on. Reciting the poem was fun.

Negative point:

Children use one notebook for all subjects. Therefore it is difficult (and impossible) for them to look at the older notes from the previous English classes. Being unable to look the notes up and not having these notes at hand, the child cannot reflect upon his/her mistakes, neither study at home systematically.

The notebooks are very chaotic. A system of taking notes is absent.

During this class all exercises from the photocopy were finished. Possessive pronouns will again be practised during the next class.

Report 6

3rd August 2007

At the beginning of the class 6 the poem “*Humpty Dumpty*” was recited aloud. Movements were added for fun.

Quickly, possessive pronouns and their Hindi equivalents were repeated. Students then were asked to write the expressions “*my sister; our school; his mother; your father*”. There was still a lot of confusion about the usage as well as the pronunciation of “*your*” and “*our*”. Therefore these two words were written down in capital letters on the board and their pronunciation was practised and examples were given again.

In the second part of the lesson, the question construction (sentences containing only the verb “to be”) was looked upon closely. Three questions and answers were written down – one after another.

Examples:

I am a teacher.

Are you a teacher?

You are a student.

Are you a student?

She is a friend.

Is she a friend?

Students were told to focus on the question construction. It proved to be quite difficult for them. The teacher made the children see and realize that the verb swaps its position with the subject in order to create a question. The pronunciation was practised.

As homework, students wrote down six English expressions containing possessive pronouns. The expressions were dictated to them by the teacher. To ensure the correct spelling, these expressions were also written on the board. They have to translate these into Hindi at home.

Expressions:

Their house; our classroom; his jacket; my family; her name; your money

N.B. Students were not sure after what sentences to put a question mark. Most of them are unaware of the difference between a statement and a question.

Report 7

6th August 2007

Out of seven children, three did not have their homework. All three of them claimed that they had to spend the weekend either travelling with their parents or helping them with housework. Vikram assisted me and helped me in asking these children for their reasons. He also stressed that writing their homework is important and that punishments could be given.

Question construction (only questions containing the verb “to be”) was practised again. Statements and their relevant question forms were written on the board.

Example:

I am a student.

Am I a student?

She is a teacher.

Is she a teacher?

The third example was “He is a boy.” The students were asked to create a question by themselves. Most of them did it successfully. More examples were given orally.

Possessive pronouns were practised through many examples.

Examples:

My book, your book, his book, her book, our book, their book

The teacher was pronouncing these expressions while pointing at herself (my book); at a student in front of her (your book); at a girl student (her book); at a boy student (his book); at all the students in the classroom (our books); at the students in another classroom (their books).

During the second half of the class the teacher arranged the tables into a U-shape.

The children were asked to take a seat, and first a few words and phrases and their spelling were practised.

Example:

Student; mother; father; I am a student.; your monkey; our house.

Unfortunately, though these words are being practised and heard almost every day, a few students still had a problem with their spelling. Some of them made only minor spelling mistakes but some of them created completely illegible nonsense words. When I asked them to look these words up in their notes, they were not able to do so as they have no structured system in taking notes. What’s more, all subjects’ notes are mixed up in one notebook.

After this exercise, the students were asked to listen and repeat. The teacher pointed at different parts of her body and named them. Then all the students, together with the teacher, counted and pronounced the names while pointing at these body parts.

Example:

1 head, 2 heads, 3 heads, 4 heads, 5 heads, 6 heads, 7 heads, 8 heads

(1 teacher + 7 students)

1 hand, 2 hands, 3 hands, 4 hands, ... (16 hands)

Also an expression like “ugly face” was used, and ugly faces were counted (8 ugly faces altogether) in order to make it a fun exercise.

The focus was on the correct pronunciation of the new vocabulary; on counting up to 20 and on seeing the difference between a singular and a plural form.

Report 8

7th August 2007

Right at the beginning of the class, the tables were again rearranged by me. This gave me the opportunity to be in a closer contact with the students.

From Eklavya’s office, I brought a world-map of a size about 50x40cm. These children saw a world-map for the first time.

First, continents were named and looked at. India, a country in ASIA, was pointed out. The names of the continents were written down by the students. The correct spelling and pronunciation were made sure.

A few countries in Europe as well as in Asia were closely looked at. Students were asked to find London in Great Britain and New Delhi in India. Bombay also was found by the students. The teacher spoke about Hollywood in Los Angeles and Bollywood in Bombay.

After practising the continents’ names again, phrases like “Where are you from?” and “I am from India.” were taught by the teacher.

Everybody was made to ask his/her neighbour this question. Then the teacher made them use different forms of the verb “to be” in sentences like:

I am from India.

You are from India.

She is from London.

He is from Hoshangabad.

We are from India.

They are from Malakhedi.

Children were given colourful pens to highlight anything they considered important.

As homework, they were asked to write down the names of any 3 continents. Next to each of them, they were asked to write any one city that is in that continent.

Report 9

8th August 2007

A world map was used and tables were rearranged again. Names of continents were repeated again.

Adjectives “*small, big, young, old*” were written down on the board and translated into Hindi.

The children were asked to point out and name the continents they knew. Some of them had trouble finding India again. India was then showed again and a sentence “*India is in Asia.*” was practised and repeated again.

Small and big countries were compared by using expressions “*India is big; Great Britain is small.*”

Questions that had been practised a few lessons ago were practised again. The teacher kept on asking the students various questions.

Examples:

How old are you?

How are you?

Are you OK?

Where are you from?

What is your name?

As the students were now a bit more familiar with the various forms of the verb “to be”, the questions were altered. The answers and reactions by the students were quite correct and positive.

Examples:

Where is *Shivani* from?

How old is *Rupesh*?

How is *Ajay*? Is he OK?

Then everybody was asked about their age by the teacher. The children wrote the numbers down including the age of the teacher.

They were asked to count $8+8+9+8+9+9+28$

(Only 2 of the 6 students present got the correct answer.)

As homework, they were asked to translate the following sentences into Hindi.

I am a student.

My sister is young.

My father is very old.

Report 10

9th August 2007

Rupa rejoined the class today after having missed 8 classes. Unfortunately, she had fallen behind in her knowledge and could not understand what her classmates were saying when speaking English. On the other hand, it was very satisfying to see the progress these children had made in English.

To start off, 3 questions were dictated and children were asked to write the answers.

How old are you?

Are you OK?

Where are you from?

All children (apart from Rupa) got their answers right. More questions were asked orally.

Then two sentences were written down on the board by the teacher.

I am from India.

I am Indian.

The difference between these two was explained and sentences were practised. Words *England* and *English* were also used.

Again, to practise the verb “*to be*”, the teacher spoke aloud “*I am English.; You are Indian.; She is Indian.; He is English.; We are Indian.; They are Indian.*”

Now, it can be said that the children have mastered all these forms. They are also able to swap personal pronouns with proper nouns.

The word *money* was written on the board, and when the children were asked to translate this word into Hindi, they said “*rupees*” (rupaye). The teacher explained that rupees are just one kind of a currency and that there are many kinds in the world. Then they were shown British currency. They very much enjoyed putting their hands on a different currency.

Words *India; Indian; England; English* were practised.

The teacher held up a note or a coin and the children were asked to produce sentences like “*This money is Indian; it is from India. This money is English; it is from England.*”

They also learnt the word “*a pound*”.

Colours were taught (practised). Some colours were already known to a few children.

The words were spelt by the teacher and all the colours were translated into Hindi.

Then two sentences were dictated.

The sky is red.

A dog is orange.

Mistakes were to be corrected by the students. (One girl wrote: “A dog is yellow.”)

Just to finish off the class, various questions were again thrown at the children. Their answers were very satisfactory despite their being distracted by other children leaving for their lunch.

As homework, children were given the dictation of a few names of colours . They were asked to translate these into Hindi and to write them all down in their notes.

Report 11

16th August 2007

During this week there were only 3 teaching days. It was also my last week of teaching. On Wednesday August 15th The Independence Day was celebrated and on Thursday August 16th children were given a holiday.

In these last three classes I focused on revising and drilling the already learnt stuff.

On Monday, after arranging tables into a U-shape again, I led a one-hour conversation with my students. I did not want them to write anything, just to listen to me and to respond.

I played with sentences by using different subjects, proper names and adjectives. Their responses were accurate, only occasional mistakes appeared. I tried to make it fun as well so I introduced several new words like “rubbish, perfect, rain, husband and wife.”

On Tuesday every child was given a photocopy of an exercise written by me. It is attached to this report. This exercise consists of 5 parts.

In the first part the children were asked to fill in a correct form of the verb “to be”.

The second part includes 3 questions that are to be answered in English.

The third part focuses on vocabulary revision. English words are to be translated into Hindi.

Next part deals with practical and every-day English questions. Answers are to be written in English.

The fifth part was set as homework. There are sentences which I read aloud together with the children. They are supposed to choose the correct word so that the whole sentence is correct and makes sense. This exercise makes the children revive their knowledge they had gained a few lessons back when a world map was used.

First students tried to do each exercise (only one at a time) on their own, and then I went through the exercise together with them. Sentences were altered by me to offer more variety, and also different questions were asked.

On the last day, the homework will be checked and mistakes corrected. As it will be my last lesson with these children, whom I got really close to, the lesson will be fun but also educational. Reading and writing will be practised.

Summary

16th August 2007

I have been teaching English to 4th-grade students at Abhimanyu Little Angels' School for 3 weeks. I am very grateful to have been given this opportunity. Language teaching is a long and complex process, so three weeks is a very short period of time. However, even within these three weeks, I have had the chance to see what advantages and disadvantages these children face.

Learning a second language is easier and hurdle-free once a child has mastered his/her mother-tongue. All these children had a good command of spoken Hindi, only a few mistakes were made in writing. Therefore they were ready to learn a second language.

My first disappointment came when I saw the textbooks they use. These textbooks are absolutely unsuitable for the environment of these children and their present level of knowledge. I therefore did not use any textbooks for these three weeks. As it was a big change and excitement to these children having me as their teacher, I did not try to impose upon them as far as possible. I tried to make the classes enjoyable, practical and fruitful. And also I realize now that one has to be enthusiastic about teaching in order to be able to put the message (knowledge) across.

The first negative point I realized after about three classes. The children at school have no system in note-taking. These children had only one notebook for all the subjects. When during a class they made a mistake in something we had already covered, and I asked them to look it up in their notes, they were unable to do so. Their notes were in a mess.

If this is the case, then I wonder how they revise at home. There's nothing to revise from, all notes are in chaos.

Therefore, I strongly suggest that a separate notepad for each subject is absolutely necessary. These children are not used to taking notes. It seems to me that no one has ever showed them how to take notes.

Also the difference between a question and an answer is not known at all. The usage of a question mark is unknown. (When asking them to create a question or to give an answer I always used Hindi terms so the problem was not language.)

As these children were already being taught English (from Marigold textbooks), they had "some" knowledge of English by the time I started working with them. However, this knowledge was very vague and included only repetition of rhymes and stories which gave no meaning to them. They were able to tell me a few phrases but had no idea of what they meant.

I approached the teaching very simply. There were also quite major differences between the children's mental abilities. This was also caused by the fact that their ages ranged between 8 and 11 years. The way and the steps I was taking every day can be traced in my individual day to day reports.

These children had to be taught basic things first. They are old enough to learn the grammar and to bring this grammar into life. Repeating poems every day is a bit of a waste of time. These children are old enough to face some drilling. Drilling also gives them some sense of repetition, revision and discipline.

The everyday teaching was also disturbed to some extent. The school has no doors in between the classrooms, small children from the kindergarten walk in and out, and a lot of noise is produced. Children themselves got annoyed many times when trying to focus on some task given to them by me.

As most of the children cannot be supervised when studying (if studying) at home by their parents, a strict approach should be introduced in school. It is vital to let the children know they HAVE TO do their homework. Homework is not a choice, it is their duty.

From my point of view, after teaching and spending quite some time with these children for three weeks, there are no major obstacles in the way of their learning English. Their abilities are equal to those of European/American children. Children are a great source of energy; they are there, waiting to be taught and to accept the teaching.

It all depends on the teacher. First, the teacher has to know his/her subject well. Teachers at Abhimanyu Little Angels' School have very limited English themselves. However, they do teach English every day, but it is a waste of their time as well as the children's. To be able to put the knowledge across, the teacher has to know (if not be proficient in) the language.

When I observed (secretly) the teachers while they were teaching English, I found that they were sitting on their chairs most of the time. As every language is a living thing, the teacher also has to be alive, active and in love with the language and the idea of teaching it. With the teacher sitting on a chair, the language becomes just another subject.

Financial resources, of course, do play an important role in education. However, even with a limited budget quite fruitful teaching can take place.

To sum up, I would highlight the major points that I see as obstacles in effective teaching and learning.

- Teachers with limited knowledge of English and without enthusiasm
- Unsuitable textbooks
- Note-taking abilities missing
- Very noisy environment at school
- No system in revision at home. (This is very important as parents are not expected to speak English so the children have to have their own inner-discipline to study and to do their homework.)