

Reinforcing Learning Through Poems

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Among the teachers I work with is Anjali Gupta, Head Teacher, Government Primary School, Dhoran (Raipur), who believes that children can learn any subject quickly and easily through stories, games, and poetry in a stress-free environment in which they do not feel the burden of studies. In doing this, they develop interpersonal communication skills and a sense of teamwork.

With over two decades of experience in teaching, Anjali Gupta composes poems and connects them with the contents of the textbooks, such as action words, tables, and counting. She uses poems to teach traffic rules, body parts and their functions, national symbols, names of days and months, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, antonyms, synonyms, sounds of animals and birds, and their English names.

In the morning assembly, she has the children recite short, interesting rhymes with gestures. When the children master a poem, she writes it on the blackboard and with her assistance, the students practice finger reading independently. Using this method repetitively, children start reading and writing simple words, paragraphs, stories, and poems.

Understanding Hindi matras through play

Anjali Gupta realised that the students were having trouble pronouncing words correctly and reading fluently because of their lack of understanding of the Hindi *matras*. So, to help them grasp *matras* well, she developed a teaching-learning material (TLM) and devised a variety of activities. For instance, she has made a '*matra khidki*' (window of *matras*) in which children can place any letter from the flashcards and then, read the letter in conjunction with a *matra*. She has also prepared flashcards of different words, alphabets, and *matras*. To help the children recognise *matras*, she gives them word flashcards and asks them to find flashcards of the *matras* that appear in the words. Additionally, children also read and write words with various *matras* in the school's print-rich environment, such as walls.

In another activity, she uses chalk to draw a letter, say, 'क' on the ground, which is subsequently encircled by different *matras*. She then calls out a sound (the letter with a *matra*), like 'को', and asks which *matra* is required to construct the sound 'को'. The students have to jump on it. She engages the children in several other such activities to



Figure 1. The *matra khidki*

deepen their understanding of the *matras*. This has resulted in a good understanding of *matras* by 75 percent of the students from classes II to V. Children are now able to speak, write, and create their own sentences. They also read short stories in their library.

Every day, the teacher makes the students write the names of five different items to help them strengthen their writing and thinking skills – names of food items, vegetables, domestic and wild animals, modes of transportation, items found in a school bag, ornaments, clothing, games, flowers, and places etc. The children are very excited to participate, and each one wants to be the first to write. As an additional exercise, the teacher has made paper slips of different items with the help of the children. She mixes them all up and the children have to segregate slips of similar items, such as names of fruits or modes of transportation. This makes children eager to read and also develops their ability to classify.

Drawings for English alphabets

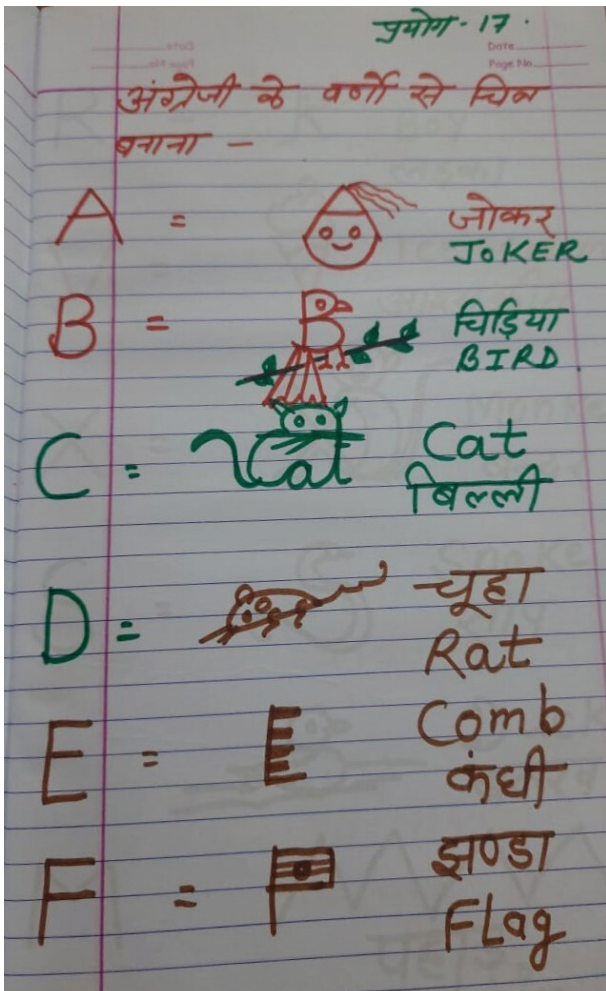


Figure 2. Students enjoy making 'alphabet figures'.

Much to the joy of her students, the teacher draws a variety of objects using English letters. She also writes the names of the objects in Hindi and English, so that the children can identify words by looking at pictures. This method helps children learn the English alphabet and new words.

Teaching through self-composed poems

According to Anita Gupta, children forget what they learn in class unless it is repeated. She has, therefore, composed short poems which she makes the children practise regularly. In the morning assembly, she makes the children perform these poems. The children recite and sing the poems with actions. For instance, she composed one explaining traffic rules for the EVS class:

Stop right now, warns the red light.

And immediately we stop.

The yellow light warns us to proceed slowly while we prepare to leave.

What does the green light say?

It says to go right away.

Counting:

Birds keep flying. Birds happily sing.

Five little birds were driving the car.

One bird flew away; now there are only four.

Four little birds were playing the flute.

One bird flew away; now there are only three.

Three little birds were sowing barley.

One bird flew away; now there are only two.

Two little birds were eating cake.

One bird flew away, and now only one remains.

One little bird rose to fame.

That too flew away; now there is only zero left.

Noun, Pronoun, Verb, and Adjective:

Let me introduce Hindi grammar to you.

And explain a noun, pronoun, verb, or adjective to you.

Naming words are called nouns.

Name of a person, place, or thing...just like Radha or Mohan

Pronouns take the place of nouns...just like 'this, that, his, or hers'.

Like a mother and teacher, Verb gets all the work done

Explains the rules of reading, writing, playing and jumping

An adjective describes a noun...tells you the difference between new and old, or good and bad.

Hindi grammar...

Synonyms:

*Ishwar, Prabhu, Parameshwar, and Bhagvan
Beta, Vats, Tanay, Sut, and Nandan*

The meanings are the same, and the names are many.

*Badal, Megh, Payod, Payodhar, Parvat, Shail,
Pahad, and Bhudhar*

*Bhanwara, Ali, Madhukar, and Bhring
Vishdhar, Nag, Ahi, Sarp, and Bhujang*

Ratri, Rain, Nisha, Nishi, and Yamini

Chapla, Chanchala, Bijli, and Damini

Mata, Lalna, and Ma

Dharini, Lalana, Nari, Ramani, and Kamini

In this way, adopting a fun approach that helps students understand the contents of the textbook, the teacher, Anita Gupta, incorporates a number of activities into the teaching-learning process, including her own poems. This helps children understand the contents of the textbook better. Children become interested in reading, and their learning improves.



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