

For the past few years, I have had the chance to engage with classes I and II for Hindi language teaching-learning. Language has a special role to play in the formation of children's behaviour and in the development of their abilities. Because the relationship between children and their language depends on their experiences, this relationship depends on the things that they come in contact with. In my class, I try to include children's experiences and connect these to the classroom processes.

Many kinds of activities can be included in the process of language education. But the reason for implementing an activity must be thought through. I have attempted to use materials from many innovative methods, and this is a continuing effort. Activities, like verbal expression and news (Azim Premji School news), excursions, storytelling, poem recitation, shared reading, guided reading, writing about experiences, language-games, bilingual conversations, and many more, were tried

out according to a plan in a phased manner in my class. Doing these, I got the opportunity to ponder over several challenges and on sharing these with colleagues, I got the chance to plan more activities. During language education, my primary objective is to motivate children to think about the importance of what they are doing – the opportunities for dialogue should be made meaningful.

I would like to share four practices that are part of my classroom teaching:

1. Diary House

Children have many experiences. They want to share all that is in their minds with everyone with the same enthusiasm that they feel. There are 30 students in class II, so, we decided that each day, five students would share their experiences with the entire class. After this, the rest of the students would share their experiences with each other in pairs. Then, these experiences would be written down cooperatively and kept in a *Diary House*.

We set up a *Diary House* in the classroom. This was decorated by pasting bits of coloured paper on it. Each day, the students would write about their experiences on a piece of paper in class or bring something written at home and keep in it.



Figure 1. The Diary House.



Figure 2. A child's work for the Diary House.

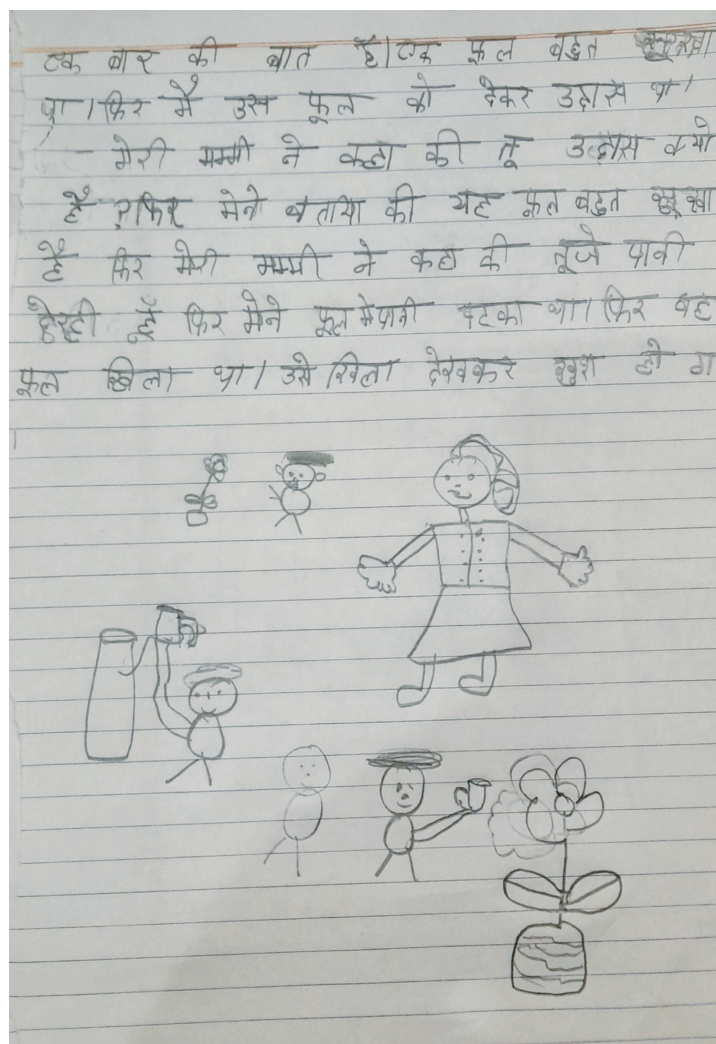


Figure 3. Another child's work for the Diary House.

They would draw and colour pictures and after showing it to others, keep these in the Diary House. This writing of experiences in class II can inspire students to keep a diary later. Opportunities to work on expressing their experiences orally and in writing are seen as their ability to present themselves spontaneously.

2. Story writing and forming questions

The primary objective of this activity was to help children read stories with understanding and then form questions. This includes their ability to answer *when, why, where, how, who*, type of questions and make up similar questions. Along with this, they were also given chances to make their own stories in the class – they invent stories with the help of pictures, listen to each other's stories and also write these down.

After inventing a story, they also made-up questions related to the story. Some observations came to the fore during this activity of making questions, such

as 21 out of the 30 students were able to make questions with correct sentence construction, while the correct placement of the interrogative word in the question had to be discussed with the rest (the children were writing the interrogative word in the beginning of the sentence).

After this, I would prepare reading materials for all from their writings. In doing this, we could create reading material appropriate for the students' level. All the children were given their own stories (modified slightly by me) as worksheets for reading comprehension.

3. Tree of books

To help them discover the joy of reading, the students of class II were introduced to story-time. They were read out stories from three- and four-line books from the *Barkha* series. Gradually, we moved to stories from *Pratham, Eklavya, Katha, Tulika* and other publications. Alongside this, we also worked on poem recitations using the big

charts from *Ektara*, and the children read these together enthusiastically in their free time.

A suggestion from the children that they enjoy reading under a tree, made me think about creating a *Tree of Books* in the classroom. A Tree of Books is made up of dry branches and resembles a tree; placed in one corner of the class with books hung from it, it attracts children to find and read new books. The children also made a *Book Hospital* for better maintenance of books – torn pages were pasted and repaired, and books kept in good condition.

The children were also exposed to level-appropriate literature in the library. After they chose the books that they were interested in reading, the books were taken to the classroom and hung carefully on the Tree of Books. The children read their favourite books from the Tree of Books daily.

Now the situation is such that even if there are just five minutes remaining for the class to end, they eagerly ask: Didi, can we read books? Can we take books from the tree?

4. Saturday special

Newness is introduced into the activities regularly by giving different kinds of exposure and opportunities to students to upgrade their language skills by themselves. The teachers of classes I and II get together on two Saturdays of each month to conduct activities in which along with language, other subjects are also included.

Farming families and agriculture – Conversations

During the period when we were working on a poem on a farmer, willing members of families which were involved in farming were invited. The grandfather of one of the students answered the questions that the children had. He had brought along different seeds with him to show and talked about preparing the field for sowing seeds. Children asked a lot of questions based on the poem they had read, and this made the discussion meaningful. The natural curiosity of the children was shining through.



Figure 4. The Tree of Books in the classroom.



Figure 5. Students interact with farming families.

Khana-khazana: Project work

During the reading of the story 'Aaloo ki sadak' (road of potatoes) in class I and 'Mooli' (radish) in class II, we talked about making recipes. The ingredients used for making potato and radish parathas were discussed and the method of making them was tried out practically. The children made some very good attempts. Then this was given as written work in the classroom by including other ingredients and items and the recipe was written by the students.

Reading campaign

The students of classes I and II were split into three groups. Using books from the library and based on the ability (level) of the group and their interests, activities, like reading together, helping with reading, gaining clarity in the use of *matras*, were included. After reading a story, children practised

telling it with suitable actions and expressions. Hearing their voices coming from all the four directions, none of us, teachers could help smiling -- sounds made by elephants were coming from one side and from another, the sounds made by goats. That day, we got together and displayed books in one part of the school. Children presented stories and read from the big display charts (we have charts by *Ektara* in which short stories and rhymes are shown using pictures and big fonts) with great enthusiasm.

It has been pointed out in NCF-FS that children enjoy learning through the medium of dialogues (talk), stories and poems. These help in the development of their natural curiosity and deeper thinking skills and values, especially when they are encouraged to contemplate, predict, ask questions and hypothesise.



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