

# Post-Teaching Activities with Reference to ELT in Karnataka:

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## Abstract:

In the year 2007, the Government of Karnataka implemented the English as a second language from the first standard in Non-English Medium schools. My intention here is to draw upon my ethnographic fieldwork to make observations on what is happening inside the classrooms and to evaluate whether the teachers follow the procedure as stated in the resource books or not. This article answers the main research question of the study, that is, to ascertain whether the teaching of English language at the first standard level is fulfilling “the objective/s” for which it was introduced or not. For this reason, I have carried out an ethnographic study of the actual class room teaching in the non-English medium schools.

**Keywords: Ethnographic, reading, writing, resource books, activities books**

In the first phase of my survey during 2008-09, I observed 47 classes and in the next academic year 2009-10 which was carried out as part of the second phase of my fieldwork. Here, I visited the same 47 schools. The following analysis has been done on the basis of my ethnographic experience, notes and videotaped materials. Here, I have taken up two segments of teaching English language namely reading and pre-writing activities.

## 1. Reading practice as given in the resource book

Reading is one of the important language learning skills. Besides, it is a much wanted skill in the life of a learner when they go out of the school. Throughout the life the persons keep reading different types of texts. We read to collect information. We also read for entertainment. Whatever be the purpose, the skill is the same. Reading is a skill in which we make meaning of written shapes.

The objectives of this activity are to develop the ability to read words and sentences in the text and developing the ability to read and appreciate short poems in English. There are 10-12 poems for reading and 10 poems for recitation from third standard onwards. In class I, learners are introduced to picture reading. They look at pictures, identify pictures related to the story, compare pictures in terms of differences, sizes etc. This is first stage of their reading where they make meaning out of pictures, shapes etc. This is in a way preparation carried out by the learners for reading in later stages. In class II, learners are provided with an informal exposure to letters and words in the activity book. They continue to read and understand pictures, colour them according to colour codes and complete pictures by reading numbers etc. Learners are introduced to stroke and pattern practice in class II.

Continued exposure to strokes and pattern help them identify letters in the activity book. In class III, learners are introduced to reading letters and words. A number of activities are included in class III that prepare learners to read words, phrases and thereafter sentences. Reading in class III is introduced following a definite pattern-learners listen to a word, see its shape in the book and understand the meaning of the word through the picture. Learners do a number of activities that strengthen their vocabulary; it helps them build a strong vocabulary base to further their reading. Learners read small texts with the help of the teacher. By the end of class III, learners can read short texts of 2-3 sentences. The focus in class III is on reading aloud, to help children associate sounds and spellings. In class IV, learners continue with reading words and phrases. They read the texts aloud initially with the teacher's help and later independently. In class IV, learners are expected to read and comprehend. Learners are given simple comprehension tasks, which they perform after they read the texts. Learners move on towards more independent reading towards the end of the class IV. They can also read the texts and understand them reasonably well (DSERT, 2008: 12-15).

### **Teachers' practice in the classroom: Based on ethnographic fieldwork/video clippings**

In the classroom, picture reading for the first and second standard was taking place. From the third standard onwards, most of the teachers began their teaching by reading aloud. Some time, they asked the learners to follow them. Some teachers told the learners to read out the text loudly. Especially, while teaching poetry the teachers asked the learners to read out the poems. But this opportunity was given for the selected learners who were fast in learning. Slow and average learners were never given this chance. During the loud reading sessions by the learners, most of the teachers did not bother much about the aspects like pronunciation, stress and rhythm. Those were the drawbacks of such activities. Most of the teachers forced the first and the second standard learners to read out the content words and sometimes the short sentences which they had written on the chalkboard.

### **2. Pre-writing activities as given in the resource book**

The objectives of this activity are to develop the ability to form lines/strokes and thus leading to the ability to form all the 26 letters of the alphabet. It begins in the form of strokes and lines formation (Italic style) from the second standard. Teachers have to find 40 session of 10 minutes duration besides the other activities for introducing strokes and lines formation and making it a part of classroom transaction during the second half of the academic year. Writing skill has to be taught as it is a more formal process, unlike speech which might be acquired naturally. Learners need to be taught how to write because each letter has a different symbol and forming the symbol on paper is a difficult task. It requires a good hand-eye co-ordination and ample practice. Hence it is useful to start teaching writing early since learners will get enough opportunities to practice. Teaching writing also helps learners identify symbols easily thereby improving their reading skills. It also provides a strong base for good handwriting in later stages.

In class I, learners get ample opportunities to understand the mechanics of writing. They get practice in holding a pencil moving it differently to draw a line, a circle etc. They also get greater control over the hand movements when they use colour pencils to colour an outline. Writing continues in class II, where the learners get formal practice in writing strokes and practicing patterns. By the end of the class II, they will be ready to start the writing of letters and words that is introduced in class III, if everything goes according to the curriculum designers.

The activity books contain lines for learners to practice strokes. A simple line or a pattern is given. Teachers can ask the learners to copy the pattern and practice in the lines given below. Since almost all the strokes are simple, learners should be able to copy them on their own. However, if some learners find them difficult, the teacher could help them in holding the pencil properly and in tracing out the pattern. Writing is a physical activity and can be tiring. The writing time for each period should not be more than 10 minutes. Learners can also write at home if they are interested. The strokes have been given in a particular sequence. The resource book insists that the sequence has to be maintained since it has been recommended by experts. However, a particular stroke which a learner finds difficult or interesting could be repeated by the teacher (DSERT, 2008: 16-17).

### **Teachers' practice in the classroom: Based on ethnographic fieldwork/video clippings**

Writing, in its simplest meaning, is the formation of patterns. Patterns are visible in every activity of our lives. In other words, writing can be said to be a process in which ideas are represented in graphic symbols. It is an act of forming symbols, patterns, which stand for letters or combination of letters. These letters or combinations relate to the sounds we make when we speak.

In the classroom, most of the teachers began their teaching by writing alphabet. They forced the learners to write down those letters in their copybooks from the first standard itself. I have several instances as evidences in this regard. When I asked the teachers about it, they ascribed it to the pressure from the parents of the learners, who want some kind of proof/documentation that they can see back home to satisfy themselves that the school is teaching English to the students. Most of them taught writing alphabet without teaching strokes and curves. They thought that teaching English is all about writing alphabet. But according to the curriculum writing does not start straight away with the letters of the alphabet, it is necessary that they have a stock of spoken language first. Then they need to be introduced to strokes and curves. Only then they are introduced to writing letters of the alphabet, not in a linear order but contextually, as they appear. The activity books provide them with visual exposure to the letters of the alphabet. Only when a proper picture of the letters of the alphabet is created in the minds of the learners, they can be introduced to writing them. But, the teachers were following this activity with great fervor ignoring the instructions given to them.



## Outcome

Thus, with regard to the different segments of teaching English language, most of the teachers are not aware of the procedure laid out in their resource books as well as taught in in-service trainings. From the data in the previous chapters I have shown that 71% of the teachers took in-service training in teaching of English from the first standard. Among them, 48% of teachers opined that the training was effective and 31% of them expressed that it was average. 86% of the teachers told that they are following prescribed methodology in the classroom. But in the field, most of the teachers are not following the procedure. It is recorded during my fieldwork. Among these two segments, most of the teachers completely neglected. Some of the teachers followed them but the procedure was not followed.

My ethnographic study of the actual class room teaching in the non-English medium schools and an analysis of it prove that the objective of introducing English from the first standard is not moving in the direction in which it was supposed to go according to the curriculum.

## References:

- Based on my ethnographic fieldwork of two consecutive years i.e., 2008-09, 2009-10
- DSERT. 2008. Teacher's Resource Books

