

# A Study Of Different Types Of Stories And Folk Tales And Their Intervention In Primary Education.

By

NAME: Sanskriti Agarwal

Place: New Delhi

Under the Guidance of:

Name: PROF. SHIVANI ARORA

Place of Work

BHARATI VIDYAPEETH  
DEEMED UNIVERSITY, PUNE, INDIA.

## *INTRODUCTION*

We have always viewed education as an idea that is a concoction. It is quite difficult to view it within the binary of teachers and students. It is much beyond that binary. It involves the pedagogies, teaching-learning materials, interactions, and experiences. We all have a conventional framework for how knowledge should flow. Usually, we imagine a process that is unidirectional. Little did we know that the real knowledge flow is bidirectional. Amidst the conventional methods of teaching-learning, there lies a wide scope of alternative pedagogies where the teachers are not skewed towards marks and performances and children view teachers as facilitators rather than individuals on a pedestal.

Literature is an important component of education. Talking about primary education, stories play a monumental role. Stories transport children to a world that is beyond their immediate environment and enables them to tickle their grey cells, imagine and create new characters and thoughts.

There are different types of stories that are a part of the primary grades curriculum and form the base of literature for children. As educators and as active stakeholders in the education domain, it is our responsibility to create a print-rich classroom for our children. Hence, the research project focuses on how this can be done authentically and efficiently thereby preserving the local flavour of the folk tales and fables.

## ***STATEMENT OF PROBLEM***

It has been found that academics these days revolve around marks and performance. Parents and teachers are skewed toward the final performance so much so that the process and learning have lost their true meaning. Amidst this building of pressure, the true flavour of learning and the individual styles of learning and expression has been lost. Thereby, to enable teaching-learning processes to be more child-centric, the project aims to bring in the literature that is lost in the classroom and make them more print-rich.

## ***AIMS AND OBJECTIVES***

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To critically analyse the text/stories prescribed by NCERT in the language textbooks for primary grades.
2. To read and analyse four different types of storybooks and one picture book and to understand how they can be integrated within the mainstream curriculum to make the curriculum and the classroom more inclusive and print-rich.
3. To suggest activities and avenues to enhance the state of the existing classrooms in order to bring their focus on languages and literature thereby improving the verbal and written expression of primary-grade children.

## ***SCOPE OF STUDY***

The result of the study would enable the classrooms to become more print-rich. It would also equip children with strategies to develop and improve their verbal and written expression. Teachers would also get a better understanding of different pedagogies revolving around languages and literature and the integration of the two.

## ***RESEARCH METHODOLOGY***

The substantial data for this research has been acquired from both primary and secondary sources via qualitative research. The primary resources include classroom observations, storybooks analysis and NCERT language textbook analysis. The secondary data includes the events conducted in schools to enhance the expression and language skills for children and the steps taken to ensure that children get enough opportunities around literature in school.

## CHAPTERS

### CHAPTER 1: Introduction

As a twenty-five-year-old, within the limited experience I have, I have tried in all my capacity to interpret others' thoughts, ideas and perspectives with different lenses. I truly believe that we as individuals are products of the movies we watch, the books we read, the people we have met and the experiences we have had. Language, with no doubt is the part and parcel of our interactions with different elements of our lives. I see it as a concoction which never ceases to amaze me with its varied functions. At times, I have fumbled in the quest to find the right words to express myself, at other times, I have chosen silence as a refuge and let the language quietly blossom inside my head and heart. As a practitioner in the field of education, rather I should rephrase it and say that as a practitioner of life, I have found myself extremely privileged to have been surrounded by little souls who love to talk, express, feel everything so beautifully. Sometimes, their subtle nuances intrigue me. Sometimes they make me wonder with the depth of their nuances.

Language is rather complex and this complexity is bound to impact the classroom space. There have been enormous discussions and substantial evidence about the fact that language development is an active process rather than a passive one. From birth, the child is immersed in language. The non-verbal means of communication, the sound making, the imitation of utterances, etc. tend to reflect the understanding of language that the child holds. I remember, when my brother was growing up and had started speaking, my mother, by default, would understand what "mum" meant. I fail to recollect an instance where she corrected him and said "water". Often at home, parents and others are sensitive to what the child is saying rather than correcting the nuances. They do not correct the child's utterances rather they understand what the child is trying to convey. At school, this communication takes a different face altogether. No doubt that there is the willingness to accept the child's utterances, but with that willingness comes the urge to correct them wherever necessary. The aim is to acquaint them with the proper structure of language or the standard language. This takes me back to the enriching discussion held with Maxine Bernstein. She gave a very powerful statement that as long as the meaning is being conveyed, there is absolutely no need to correct children. I would completely endorse the view.

Bernstein in her paper, Standard and Non-standard Language: The Teacher's Stance, has beautifully mentioned that it is not important to take an extreme position while choosing between standard and non-standard language. If a child tries to say something, one should try to capture the meaning rather

than focusing on correcting the child's language. The writer also highlights an important argument that with the right skills, children will eventually understand the standard language. They will understand the difference between rural and standard speech. Similar views were expressed by Paula Menyuk in one of her papers when she said that it is important for children to understand that there are different ways of saying the same thing. They learn these ways by exploring and analyzing knowledge. When we correct their language, we do not encourage them to explore, rather we tend to create insecurity about using language. Pinnel (1980)

Language learning comes with a deep sense of responsibility. Children often take responsibility for what they learn. Children are so eager to learn and they are confident that they will make sense of the experiences awaiting them. Yet, the children who seem to understand language structures so comfortably have great difficulty in understanding what is taught at school. The education system almost fails to utilize the language learned at home to foster further language development. Pinnel (1980). They are exposed to different things at home but unfortunately, they are not allowed to incorporate those nuances in the written form. Oral and written form of language are very different in a classroom. Often, we tend to ignore the similarities between oral and written form.

Children come to the classroom with a lot more than just their backpacks. They carry rich linguistic experiences with themselves. I remember teaching in a class where a child said, "Khaat". It was amazing how the discussion revolved around different words for bed. Children came up with words like, "khatiya" and "chaarpai". It is amazing how language connects people and entice us in millions of ways. In the paper, *Hundreds of Home languages in the Country and many in most Classrooms: Coping with Diversity in Primary Education in India*, Dhir Jhingram has discussed various language situations in the classrooms. One of which is the strict medium of instruction used in the classroom. Usually, the language with which children come to school is different to the language that is used to impart knowledge in the school environment. An even adverse situation is when the teacher does not know the regional or the mother tongue of the child. Often, teachers do translate the meaning in children's regional language or the mother tongue, however, mixed first language situations are quite common in the classrooms. Children do not share a common regional language. Children who do not understand the language which is the medium of instruction often face difficulties in comprehension. One can absolutely not overlook the psychological trauma these young souls might go through. We often argue that the real knowledge is always based on the existing experiences, on the contrary, we provide

children with completely alien language, and all the new experiences are dominated by it. Jhingram's ideas seem to coincide with Rama Kant Agnihotri's views on medium of instruction to be an alien language for our children. Both have highlighted the fact that the school assumes that transaction should take place in a standard/official language. Children's vernacular voices are seldom ignored and silenced. As discussed in Jhingram's paper, the dropout rates from class 1 to 5 and from 6 to 8 are quite high. In the attempts made to reach the children in their local dialects have not aimed at the local culture and knowledge. An example of this is the primer that was developed by the NCERT in several states. These primers were made in the tribal language and were found to be mere translations of the state language books. Little did they cater to the comprehension problem of the children. Several poems, texts, riddles etc. were also compiled in the local dialects of the children. However, this wasn't integrated within the mainstream curriculum. Rather it was treated as an add on just to make children comfortable during the initial weeks.

Towards the culmination of the discussion, I would raise a question. If one conceptualizes a paradigm shift that would regard the linguistic variation in the classroom as an asset and leverage that, can we ensure a step forward towards a classroom which is more conducive in nature? We need not say that the resources we need working towards such an endeavor would be a textbook, or any other printed material. It can be rich discussions, art and craft, songs of a particular culture, etc.

Often in our classrooms, we work around modifying the story, giving it a different ending or improvising a scene. Such activities should not act as a filler activity, but should be an essential part of the learning process. It would give children an opportunity to use their language. Rather than giving our children explicit knowledge about phonetics, spellings, etc. which would hardly make any meaning to them, these aspects should be built on the already existing knowledge about language. Lastly, there should be space for children to correct themselves without the fear of failure. Rather than looking for mistakes in the child's language, we can try to look for meaning.

**CHAPTER 2: Analysis ‘Sundaram Learns to Read’ by Kutumba Rao**

*“Schools have a responsibility to expose kids to things they don’t yet know they love.”*

-Gary Stager

Like every other endeavour of ours, growing up is one of them which comprises all the others. It is indeed like a voyage, rather a long one with sometimes familiar situations, experiences, identities, knowledge and an avalanche of emotions, thoughts and ideas. At time this voyage encompasses lessons which stay with us for a minute and sometimes, even a lifetime.

My childhood years primarily revolved around marks and performance. The school domain and learning at home were skewed towards attaining a particular score so much so that the idea that real knowledge lies outside the four walls never struck me. It was only when I got associated with an organization (non-governmental organization working for the underprivileged) that I realized that true learning exudes happiness, unbridled joy and smells like real life. As a student, a curriculum developer and as a facilitator, I have trodden several paths. Every experience is penned down within my brain like a testament for the effort I have been putting in making learning tangible for myself and others. The story of Sundaram, beautifully presented by Kutumba Rao has opened gates that were locked at different instances of time by different individuals, every time with a more powerful lock and key.

It is beautiful how most of us begin our school lives with dreams, aspirations, knowledge and with hope. I wonder what I might have thought before going to school. Well, if at all technology had taken that leap of travelling back to time, I would have jumped in the machine, and just like Sundaram, I am sure that I would have found my faith, conviction and hope rested in the upcoming school days, only to witness the revelation of the unknown.

Sundaram’s story is not just restricted to his learning experience. It is an experience with which we all can relate and resonate with. It provides opportunities to reflect on our experiences, to amend our current practices and to explore more within the domain of literacy.

***Culture and language***

When we talk about community, we also consider the element of community associated with it. As individuals who are part of a particular community tend to acquire certain abilities, competencies, attitude, identities which would be driven towards the pursuit of the aspirations and goals of the community. Language, inevitably becomes an interwoven component. Lankshear sheds light on some essential elements while discussing about the language and the community. When we acquire or learn a language in a community, we learn about the community’s practices, outlook and assumptions. Thus, one can say that language, like other components, is a means of cultural

transmission. Lankshear, in his paper, Language as Medium of Cultural Process, highlights how culture can be considered as a defining factor in terms of pedagogy adopted in the teaching learning processes.

While talking about the learning process of children from two different communities, middle-class working families and migrant working-class communities, he evidently makes it clear how the influence of the community is of immense consequence, especially when it comes to teaching learning processes. The examples stated do carry some semblance with the story of Sundaram. In the case of migrant working-class families, the learners saw the teacher perched on a podium with authority. The teacher was treated like a vessel of knowledge whose primary task was to impart that knowledge. The classroom transaction rested on the notes giving policy and no questions were part of the pedagogy. In contrast, for the learners from the middle-class working families, the teacher was seen as a mere facilitator who had to provide them the experiences. Their notions about classroom language revolved around debate, discussion and questions. Both the groups tend to come from different social groups which is why their sense of the school environment, transaction and language used in the classroom is completely different.

Sundaram belongs to community where the teacher is the knowledge giver and whatever the teacher provides in terms of experience, language and knowledge, it will speak volumes for itself. One can clearly see amidst the nuances throughout the story that how the teacher is seen in a position with authority and has the leverage that comes with the authority to control the learners. (*They will have him harness with a rope in his nose*). The transaction in the class was based on constant drilling method and rote memorization. The teacher, Raghavayya, wrote the letters on the slate expecting Sundaram to rewrite over them incessantly. As Lankshear suggests that the pedagogy and the language uses are essential elements in maintaining the social and culture differences between the communities. In the case of Sundaram, it can be highlighted that the community functions on a distinctive pattern of life which influences the experiences of the individuals. The structured routine shows the dominance over discussion, debate and interaction.

Another important aspect that needs to be addressed here is the cultural group and the dominance it exerts on the language, learning styles and pedagogical practices. In Sundaram's classroom, the culture's dominance can be seen via the processes of presenting knowledge, notions of correctness and literacy practices. These processes were in the garb of rote memorization, drills and blindly following what the teacher told and asked to do.

Discussion revolving around Lankshear's paper would be incomplete without mentioning Leona. Leona and Sundaram, though placed in different contexts, probably different time zones and different settings altogether, speak for each other. Leona, completely unaware of the demands of the mainstream

schooling practices (sharing-time), tried to bring in her experiences and her stories to the classroom. However, a particular culture, pedagogy, rules and the explicit use of language governed the teaching leaning practices. Similarly, Sundaram, whose first experience of schooling was alien to him, could hardly find any space for solace in his classroom. For Sundaram, the classroom was a new space altogether. Rather than building up a familiarity with the space, he could only establish a disconnection with it.

All throughout the story, I was in awe of this little boy and amazed to see how he was so zealous in his pursuit of learning and gaining knowledge. When in a moment he enticed me, in the next, he made me question and like a wanderer, he sent me to different places. Not that there was a road map to my journey, but the places did appear in an order, as if they were establishing a connection. I took a detour at times, which is why I have landed on the second part of the discussion.

### ***Guided Participation: A Paradox***

In guided participation, the learners and the facilitators create a space which conduces learning. It is space where the learners' activities are observed, revised with the required assistance and gradually the learners take control over their learning and the processes of gaining skill and knowledge. The conducive space provides the expanse of different situations which enable children to extend their existing knowledge. It is also through cultural participation that children learn to pursue the cultural identities, roles and aspirations.

It can be clearly seen that there are two aspects of guided participation. In Sundaram's story, one can identify how the role of the teacher is of immense consequence in embedding Sundaram within the existing cultural notion of literacy processes which is rewriting the letter over and over again without the opportunity to engage with them meaningfully. As Heath (1982, 983) presents her study about the different communities, it makes me question and mull over the idea of socialization in a community within the framework of guided participation. Children in the Appalachian mill town were aware of the written word but could not express their ideas and thoughts. On the other hand, children in the black mill town could creatively use language but could not make sense of the school discourse. It can be said that children in both the contexts experienced difficulties in the sphere of literacy. Talking about guided participation in this aspect, the socializing process marked one skill more important than the other. Similarly, Sundaram was acquainted with one aspect that was the knowledge about the written word without actually being provided the scope and the space to engage with it creatively.

I recollect here the understanding of the idea of guided participation. Thinking about Sundaram, I wonder where the understanding of 'participation' was employed during his school experience. While he was engaged in rewriting the letters, which seemed eternal to me, there was hardly any space for his

participation. Even if there was, the foundation wasn't willingness. Hence, the term guided participation in the presence of his teacher, seems more like a paradox in my view. On the other hand, talking about his mother, although one cannot deny the fact that socialization of the literacy aspects continues in this engagement as well, however, there was space for Sundaram to appreciate his learning and understanding. Rao goes on to explain beautifully how both, the mother and the son were learning in the interaction. At times, Sundaram's mother could not write the letters perfectly in one go. But it was remarkable to see how both of them in a shared space, participated and guided each other. It was a novel experience for both of them.

### *Emergent Literacy*

As a teacher in a system where subversiveness is not appreciated much and is often frowned upon, one can utilize the leverage of being a facilitator but cannot change the instructional strategies. One can play around, modify them to encourage kids to learn in the most meaningful ways. Being in such a system, I know and I understand that early literacy instruction comprises of the formal and the mechanical aspects of written word. Learning how to write letters is the first step to the ladder of literacy. Letters lead to blending them to make a word, words lead to more words and then finally a construction of a sentence. Sundaram's experience with literacy and his first encounters with letters have taken me back to Teale's and Sulzby's paper, *Emergent Literacy: New Perspectives*. The paper has enabled me to reflect on Sundaram's experience in a deeper sense.

Teale and Sulzby highlight some of the very crucial aspects of learning to read and write. One cannot say that Sundaram's first experience with letters was at school. The child is surrounded by text, rather immerses in language. Literacy is rather experienced by every child in the most real settings and in the most subtle ways. The only difference here is that goal that has to be accomplished from the experience is completely different to that which is consciously set in the school atmosphere by the teachers. In Sundaram's school environment, the early experiences revolved around writing letters and rewriting them over and over again. There is an element of unfamiliarity with the experience. Nuances like, "There is no relation between what was being done and what learning was.", can be spotted in the text affirming the idea that learning was not driven by real life experiences in the school. While the paper goes on to argue that children often reconstruct the meaning of the text by deviating from the actual meaning it also stresses on the fact that as children experience reading and writing in different contexts in their lives, they move closer to the usage of written language.

The interaction of Sundaram and his mother demonstrates several aspects of literacy. It was with his mother that he could appreciate the letters and their beauty. At times, he could understand their sound and the relationship they shared based on it. He could understand and grasp the kinship between specific letters. It was the experience which was provided in the space he

shared with his mother that enabled him to reflect on these aspects of letters and play around with them in his head. Juxtaposing his school experience with his learning experience at home, the same letters appeared nothing more than unusual and unfamiliar pieces with chalk at school. As Teale and Sulzby highlight that there is a strong link between literacy, experience and the active use of language, they also suggest that children need opportunities to experiment with writing and reading. They need to interact independently and explore the written word. The independence in the learning process was gravely missing in Sundaram's school experience.

Often in a classroom setup, the technical aspects receive more heat than exploration and experimentation with the written word. The shape of the letter, the size and orientation are extremely important aspects. In Sundaram's story, it can be seen how his father did not acknowledge or recognize the effort of writing all the letters. Rather, the focus area was the shape, the script, the size and other factors which play a mere superficial role in literacy. At several instances, Seethamma can also be seen suggesting Sundaram that he can write words and read them only after he learns all the letters, the compounds and the markers. Teale and Sulzby do highlight in the paper that literacy develops in the real settings in which the goals are not pre-set. A beautiful supporting example can be children being read different stories. Children might not know how to read the words but if a particular story is read to them several times, they can, in fact, they do act like readers, reconstructing the meaning of the story. The narration is not a memorization of the words but their own understanding and meaning of the story. This can also be related by an incident in Sundaram's story. In his quest to read and write, such an incident was no less than a miracle for his mother. My understanding of emergent literacy further deepens here by seeing how Sundaram could read the letter by grouping and guessing some letters and by considering some as mere figures.

The understanding of the idea of emergent literacy in the context of Sundaram can be understood with the help of the fascinating idea that Shailaja Menon puts across in her paper, 'Supporting Early Language and Literacy through Children's Literature'. Literacy is not a process which can encompass the learning of the script in the minimalistic ways. There is a need for rich discussions and conversations in the classroom which encourage children's nuances and establishes a sense of relevance and connect with the word and their world, which in the case of Sundaram was missing. Also, there is a strong connection and an interrelationship between oral language, reading and writing. Strong oral language tends to facilitate reading and writing. In Sundaram's classroom, any kind of discussion, conversation and questioning was strictly discouraged.

As literacy development can be experienced by children in different domains of life, they do try to make sense of their experiences around oral and written language in their own ways. They are engaged in writing symbols, establishing relationships with symbols and understanding the relationship of sounds and

symbols. They constantly test their understanding, change their strategies and participate actively in literacy learning. Therefore, it can be said that as Sundaram could make sense of a written text and understand it without learning all the letters or following the trajectory to literacy, children show different behaviours of emergent literacy which might be wrong as per the standards of adults, but are very much conceptual and part of the developmental process.

I can understand the plight of Sundaram and his inquisitiveness when learning letters at home. There is a strong contrast with the formal learning and the learning of the oral language. Sundaram was eager to use the letters he had learnt to make words and then write sentences. The letters and the process of learning was rather unrewarding to him in the immediate sense whereas the oral language was used simultaneously. Hence, it is imperative that meaning making is involved. The experience should be enriched by providing a non-threatening environment to the children which is not driven by the learning of the mechanical aspects of language. An environment where children can share their experiences, generate hypothesis about written text and construct relationship between oral and written language, is conducive to learning.

### *Sharing words and worlds*

Bringing the discourse towards its culmination, I cannot summon up a better idea than that given by Freire in his paper, 'The Importance of the Act of Reading'. His words reflect the idea that reading cannot be limited or exhausted by an act of decoding the written language. In fact, it is wider process which revolves around the relationship between language and reality, text and context and word and world. A classic example of Sundaram reading the letter in the most fascinating ways enable and urge us to repose our faith in this idea of sharing word and world.

At several instances in the story, Sundaram is seen appreciating the beauty of the letters. They seemed beautiful to him and were symbols whose shapes he was trying to absorb throughout the learning process. Linking this to what Dyson says in his paper, 'Symbol Makers, Symbol Weavers: How children link Play, Pictures and Print', that letters tend to appear as art forms or drawing for children. Earliest experiences do not involve decoding meaning but are considered as acts of drawing. It is the accompanying talk, gestures and explanation which makes this art form meaningful to them. Talking about his school experience, the accompanying talk or even little interaction based on what was being written on the slate was completely missing. The story also provides evidence of the boy engaging himself with the sounds associated with the letters. He also tries to understand the one-to-one correspondence

between letters and name and tries to invent spellings of different words. Here, Dyson discusses Wolf and Gardner's 'digital wave'. Digital wave involves learners using sounds of letters to create spellings. The inquisitiveness and the urge to read and write of Sundaram stems from the idea that the symbols/letters that are written are not just mere signs that are learnt, but a new way of representing and sharing their world.

In the most candid ways, one can say that it rests on the facilitator to make the experience enriching or mundane. Britton puts this idea forward that it is essential for the facilitator to step out of the practical responsibilities and savour the experience with the learner in a collaborative manner. We share our worlds and words, we move together towards a holistic approach which is heavily derived from our experiences, context and understanding about our world. Sundaram could seek such a space with his mother who not just presented the word to him but also shared his word and world. It was through the novice attempts of the boy, that his mother felt as if she was learning to write the letters again. Wells also endorses an idea resonating with this thought, that the teacher need not be an instructor, but a discoverer and a companion in the voyage of learning. Wells raises an important argument about learning in a collaborative environment. Sundaram, in his school space was hardly given a responsibility or a feeling of ownership over his own learning processes. In the paper, 'Helping Children to Make Knowledge Their Own. "The Meaning Makers', he argues that if learners are made responsible and are given ownership over their own learning, they behave responsibly and work in the facilitator's guidance. Therefore, a sense of negotiation is required which values the suggestions and inputs of both, learner and the facilitator. Another exemplary idea that Wells talk about while discussing the collaborative endeavour of the teacher and the learner is the breadth of learning with which the facilitator/teacher immerses himself or herself in the learning process. The experience can be a lifelong learning enterprise for both if the expanse of their learning is wide enough to continue to rest on the learning curve. As soon as the one of the participants feels that he/she is competent enough and narrows down the breadth of learning, it no longer remains a path that can be trodden together. It ceases to become a journey for the two and paves the path for two solitary journeys with an uncertainty of ever meeting at a junction.

**CHAPTER 3: Reading the following storybooks**

1. A saree for Ammi by Mamta Nainy
2. Geet ka kamaal, eklavya
3. Paani utra teen par by Pramod Pathak
4. 2 by Orjan Persson and Kaveri Gopalkrishnan

These storybooks are local and native folk tales and poems that will give an insight into how the local literature feels like. It will also talk about the culture, the cadence of the literature and the tone of the society it is set in. It will not just help our children appreciate different cultures but will increase their vocabulary.

5. David gets in trouble by David Shannon

This is a wordless picture book. Apart from reading and writing, our children should also learn to understand pictures and read the expression. This will give an insight based on that.

**CHAPTER 4: Analysis of NCERT Language Textbooks**

Text book analysis will give an insight into what kind of texts are prescribed for the primary graders as of now and what more interventions are required. The scope of work and improvement will be clearer with the help of this analysis and a multidisciplinary approach can be followed thereafter. Teachers can be provided with print-rich lesson plans that focus on language development and literacy to enhance expression, verbal and written.

***A peek into my world- How the NCERT Holistically talks about all these elements?***

We have always been immersed in language. We interpret the world, the books, other people, etc, through language. We think about a wide variety of things via language. Our first encounters with language, as children, have mostly been quite natural. We observe, imitate, learn, draw, doodle, play and write in the course of language development. I would like to begin the discourse of the assignment with an anecdote.

*“I remember the first time I was told to take a class. I had always imitated my teachers as a child and my mother would become my one and only student, but that first class was so different and captivating. I wasn’t there to imitate*

*anyone now. I had to be the individual I am and I had to wear the storyteller's hat and give my kids an experience of a lifetime. I can recollect how my fingers trembled and my palms went red. For a person who has navigated her life in solitude, it was definitely a challenging situation. I had literally all the eyeballs in the classroom when suddenly a girl with a deep smile on her face, gave me a peck on my cheek. Physical touch does wonders. It was that day when I reaffirmed that statement. It was that fine day when I understood why my mother would always tap my cheek while seeing me off to school. Some experiences leave us warmed forever with their afterglow. This one surely bagged that position. It has been difficult to outgrow it since then and to be honest, I have never even tried to do that.”*

Freire, in his paper, *The Importance of The Act of Reading*, mentioned how we recollect memories and understand that the letters and words are incarnated within these memories, comprising of objects, people, animals, etc. When I recollect this memory, I wonder how that peck communicated different emotions. I wonder how that little peck on my cheek would instil confidence within me. It is at this very moment when I am recollecting the experience, I have understood how reading the world precedes reading the word. While I am penning down this particular anecdote and pondering upon the same, I have recreated and relived the very experience of it. Just like Freire would say, the letters and words were intertwined with that little tap and with that peck on the cheek.

### ***Imaginative play and children's drawings***

Lev S. Vygotsky had proposed that it is the make-believe play that fosters the development of symbolic thought and also aids in self-regulation. As a primary teacher, I can without any doubt say that a child who would sit for just 5 minutes during a class can sit for as long as ten to fifteen minutes during make-believe play. For instance, when a child imitates to be the class-teacher and the others act as children in the class, it is absolutely amazing to be a spectator and at the same time be in awe of these kids. It is wonderful to see how they collaborate with each other and enact a particular scene. There are no ways about the fact that the capacities which are forged during make-believe play are gradually taken over to the real-world endeavours thus making play a major source of development.

Dyson, holding the similar view, considers the imaginative world of children as a way of creating a fabric of the world with different symbolic materials. Going back to the example I took of children enacting a classroom scene, it is interesting to note how children use gestures to bring the experience alive. With time, it was seen that children also began to use the black board and

correcting the notebooks. The use of black board can be a form of drawing. It is the child who is bringing the real-life experience into his/her drawing and also merging it with imaginative play. Connecting it back to the treasure map that was made by Lena, she had drawn the jagged lines as stairs because she could recollect her experience of climbing up the steps. Thus, it is during imaginative play and drawing when children can create constant linkages between the medium and the experiences. One of my favourite statements from Dyson's paper would fit appropriately here, "It is the ability that supports young children's acquisition of the basic symbolic tools of their culture in time, children can use these tools to transform their experienced world into imagined ones in which they are in charge." Hence, one can also say that rather these drawings and the imaginative play act as the evidence of children's creative capacities.

Dyson has highlighted the development waves which are imperative to discuss.

It is during the first wave when children begin to act on objects and they also understand that the objects and people have their own existence. It is especially during this time when they begin to invent symbols for themselves.

The second wave can be understood with the example given above of children enacting a classroom scene. Their make-believe play represents somebody's role. It is during this time when children begin to develop representational skills that are needed for language development. As Britton also highlights in his paper, *Words in a World*, that we represent our world to ourself and to others. There are different types of representations. As human beings, we all internalize our experiences in the form of certain representations. Our representations are however, subject to changes. As we present the picture of our world to each other, we form a common world but with different representations, primarily because we all have been treated differently and our representation may vary. For instance, in this particular case, the make-believe play of a child enacting the classroom scene might be different to that of another because both of them have had different experiences in the same classroom. They may also represent their experience differently. As discussed in the following section, a child may also create an image for the same.

The second wave also comprises of the images that children make. Children are able to bring in their experiences to the images they create. They can represent objects, people and different things via their pictures.

We were showed some beautiful art work of children in one of our FLP sessions. Connecting it with Dyson's idea of play as a canvas, I would say that one could easily make out how one of the children had specifically made five

fingers in the human figure. Numerical mapping is one of the additions here to the symbolic repertoire of the child. It is also the beginning of writing. This according to Dyson is the third wave.

### **Writing**

Krishna Kumar calls writing a kind of talk. The only difference that lies here is that often the person with whom we are communicating is not often in our vicinity. In schools and even in some homes, writing is often introduced to the children as a mechanical skill which has to be acquired by learning the shape of the letters, rote memorization and constant drilling methods. Several primers have been introduced in the school curriculum to ensure that children learn to read and write by the right age. Very often, we, as teachers and parents ignore the drawings of the children as a form of writing. Dyson, beautifully sheds some light on the fact that letters first tend to appear as drawings in children's world. In fact, the process of drawing and then talking about their picture/image is early writing for them.

Going back to the example I discussed before about the child enacting the teacher and recreating the classroom experience, the child also began to use the blackboard and checking the notebooks just like his/her teacher does. The images drawn on the blackboard, the lines or the check marks made by the child in the notebooks, the stars given in the notebooks, etc, are all forms of writing which are rarely acknowledged in schools or at homes.

Dyson mentions that children begin to represent certain objects in their drawings with letters. A classic example can also be Leena's map which had words like 'yes' and 'no' to signify something. At a later stage, children also begin to use the characteristics of sounds of names of different objects to invent spellings. Their first form of writings is rather not memorized spellings but invented spellings to represent their world.

### **Unified process of development**

Vygotsky said that, imaginative play, images and drawing are all part of a unified process of development. Children function as authors and make use of different symbolic representations to represent their worlds. When we discussed about the child involved in make-believe play, the child also began using the blackboard to represent his experience, however, the child does not abandon play or drawing, rather it's the unified process as a whole which enabled him/her to represent the experience. Hence, one can also say that children, as they begin using different symbolic representations like play, drawing and letters, they gain more control over their distinctive powers.

Children are constantly evolving in the field of symbols. Gradually, they also begin to represent their experiences with collaboration. Often children's drawings are important centres of their talk and discussion. Britton mentioned that as we build a representation for our experience, we share it with the world to construct a larger world. Children present their worlds to each other for a shared understanding. We view each other's worlds as spectators. At times, we also view our own world as spectator and savour the feelings which are accompanied with the experience. Children's representations like drawing, imaginative play and forms of writing also involve social negotiations. Children's written sights or visuals can become sites for imaginative play and can lead to talk. As showcased in one of the classic examples given by Dyson of Chiel and Nate. These kids were led to talking and thus created an imaginative space for themselves with the help of their drawings.

Britton also endorses the view that children's first attempts at writing is dependent on the speech experience. As one can see in the map made by Mitzi, it included imaginative play and talk. They were having a conversation about where the treasure can be. Symbols here are used as social tools among friends to represent and interpret an experience. The map also included 'yes' and 'no', signifying that as children proceed from one symbolic form to another, they do not abandon the previous forms, rather, it is a unified process of representation.

As Sapir beautifully pens it down in his paper, Language, language as a symbolic system is constantly in interplay with experience. It is rather an intimate association. It not just helps us to represent our experience, but, one can relive it, redefine it, at times, one can even substitute the whole experience itself. Similarly, considering drawing, imaginative play and writing also forms of symbolic systems, they are in constant interplay with the experience. While drawing, children refer to their experiences and talk about them with their peers. Hence, neither of them can be treated in isolation with each other. It is the cumulative experience which empowers children to represent their worlds, interpret other's worlds and create a common world.

## CHAPTER 5: Creating lesson plans and Interventions for Schools and Teachers

This is an instrumental chapter as it focuses on devising powerful interventions for schools and teachers to help improve the teaching-learning processes to equip children with language skills. Interventions will include book fairs, book week, lesson plans, interactive libraries, immersive class libraries, etc.

<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>LEARNING STRATEGY, PEDAGOGIES AND DIGITAL SUPPORT</b>	<b>COMPETENCY</b>	<b>LEARNING OUTCOME</b>
<p><b>Naming words/ Nouns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Common nouns</b></li> <li>- <b>Proper nouns</b></li> </ul>	<p>-Scavenger hunt activity (Children go for a nature walk and list down all the nouns they see and classify them into common and proper nouns)</p> <p>-‘Speedy noun’ game (writing maximum number of nouns in one minute.)</p> <p>-Newspaper activity (Underline all the proper nouns with red and common nouns with green colour.)</p> <p>-Written assignments and worksheets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The children use nouns appropriately in sentences.</li> <li>- The children understand the difference between common and proper nouns in a sentence.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The children were able to identify/recognise nouns from the given sentences or his/her surroundings.</li> <li>2) The children were able to classify the nouns into two categories- common and proper nouns.</li> <li>3) The children were able to effectively use nouns in sentence composition.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Reading</b></p>	<p>-The children will read a story from the prescribed story-book, 'Hitopadesha 1'. -The children will enact the story or do a role play.</p>	<p>-The children read the story and comprehend its meaning. -The children read the story loudly with expression.</p>	<p>-The children were able to read the text fluently. -The children were able to understand the text read by them. -The children will be able to identify the value hidden in the story. - The children will be able to modify the story while doing role play.</p>
<p><b>Sentence construction</b></p>	<p>-The children will practise sentence-construction by arranging the jumbled words correctly. -The children will be given words to create sentences with.</p>	<p>-The children will write jumbled words in the correct order. - The children will write interesting and meaningful sentences.</p>	<p>-The children will solve the jumbled words to create meaningful sentences. -The children will compose meaningful sentences from the given words.</p>

Samples of lesson plans made by me have been attached below.

English Lesson Plan - October

Theme :- Tenses (carry forward)  
Month :- October  
No. of Periods :- 17

→ adjectives  
 → Synonyms & Antonyms

Sub Theme :-  
 → Exercises based on Tenses will be taken up in the class.  
 → Recognizing the correct tense by circling and identifying  
 → Usage of appropriate adjective to describe a particular person.

Content (Topics) :-  
 → Identify the tenses and adjectives through various exercises.  
 → Writing the tense sentence using tenses and adjectives.  
 → Describing the noun using various adjectives.  
 → List of Synonym and Antonym.

Resources :- Videos, storytelling, audiovisual aids, pictures

Learning Objectives	Activities
→ Children will be able to understand that adjectives are also called describing words and are used to describe a particular person/object/place or thing.	→ <u>Self-portrait</u> :- children will create a face cut out and write all the adjectives (describing words) to describe themselves. eg. peppy, pretty, etc
→ Children will be able to use adjectives to frame sentences.	→ <u>Behind my back</u> :- children will be encouraged to talk about each other and their teachers using adjectives. (Group Activity)
→ List of children will be given to the children based on synonyms and antonyms of various words.	→ written exercises in the notebook will be done based on adjectives. → list will be given to the children based on antonyms and synonyms. Children will be given questions notebook exercises based on the same.

Reflections and Observations :-  
 Activities like 'Inside Out' and 'Self Portrait' enabled children to learn and know more skills like self awareness and peer relationship learners got a chance to know themselves

Class room process: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_

Concept Map :-

```

    graph TD
      Tenses --> SimplePresent[Simple present]
      Tenses --> PresentContinuous[Present continuous]
      Tenses --> FutureTense[future tense]
      Tenses --> SimplePast[Simple past]
      Tenses --> PastContinuous[past continuous]
    
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Remediation :-  
 → Exercises based on tense (simplified one) will be done in class.  
 → Retraining the concepts through oral discussions, videos and one to one discussions will be done in the class.

Worksheets :- worksheet for the month of September both online and offline will be done in the class.

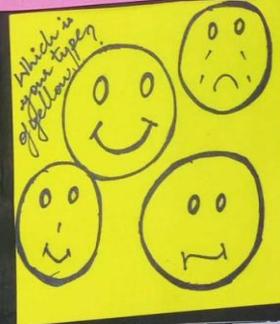
Reflections & Observations :-  
 → Children understood about verbs and could use verbs and identify them while not communicating.  
 → Children could understand helping verbs and they were able to use them and identify them in sentences.

English Lesson Plan - September

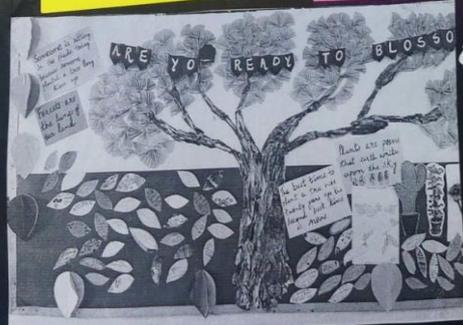
<u>Theme</u> :- Tenses	<u>Month</u> September	<u>No. of Periods</u> :- 19	
<u>Sub Theme</u> :- Usage of verbs in present tense, past tense and future tense like eat, will eat, ate. Recognising the verb and tense by circling and labelling.			
<u>Content</u> :- Under Identify the verb and tense through various written exercises. Write a sentence using past present or future tense.			
<u>Resource</u> :- Video clips, flash cards, story books, additional text			
<u>Learning Objectives</u> Students will recognize and learn when to use present tense or past tense. Students will understand the usage of tenses. Students will be able to differentiate among tenses. Students will be able to use verb in different tenses while framing sentences. Students will be able to attempt exercises related to tenses. Students will be able to develop vocabulary and write sentences using appropriate tense.	<u>Activities &amp; Methodology</u> <u>Story telling - Circus</u> <u>Video clip - General</u> <u>Discussion</u> :- Make sentences, pick verbs and start classifying the events as they happen. <u>How Verb tense shows time</u> :- Past tense -> something which has happened. Present tense -> happening right now. Future tense -> will happen in some time. <u>Fortune teller</u> :- Children will be given some verbs and they will convert them into future tense. <u>My daily Routine</u> :- Children will write about all the things they do in a day. <u>Match the Lego bricks</u> :- break      make      run broke     made      ran  Helping words of verbs to be continued in September.	<u>Assessment</u> Discussions Conceptual questions will be asked to the children. Quiz will be conducted in the class. Group activity will be conducted. Worksheets about the usage of helping verbs will be given. Written exercises will be done via newspaper activity to be done in class.	<u>Learning Outcome</u> Children were able to use verbs in present past and future tense. Children understood the usage of verbs and helping verbs. Children learnt the usage of helping verbs. Children helped via newspaper activity to be done in class.

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"What is my type of yellow" revolves around emoticons and face expressions. Open our eyes and facial expressions reflect what we really feel. This activity encourages children to share their current mood/feeling and also talk about it. It gives them a space to know about their own emotions and to know about their peers' feeling. It's amazing to see how children bring in their daily life instances and talk about them with such ease. Interesting



Children's work displayed on the board. Follow up activities, cards after nature walk.



them to think about how they feel, more deeply. It is also a step towards relieving the integration of life skill curriculum with the mainstream curriculum.

SEL Integration [Socio-Emotional Learning]

Mujhe Kaisa Lagta hai?  
We go through so many emotions and feelings on a daily basis but how many times do we actually stop and acknowledge how we really feel?

- Mujhe Kaisa lag raha hai?  
How does my heart feel?  
This activity enabled my kids to understand how they are feeling and how does their heart feel?  
When do I have a caring heart?  
When do I have a brave heart?  
When do I have a lazy heart?  
When do I have a happy heart?  
When do I have a sad heart?  
When do I have a scared heart?

Our heart feels differently in different situations. Knowing how our heart feels and acknowledging our feelings and emotions is the first step to being self-aware and manage our emotions.  
Activity: Colour of my emotions.

How do I feel joy?  
What's the colour of my joy?  
Where do I feel it in my body?

Children identified colours of their emotions and also identified the body part where they feel it.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

**Conclusion may or may not be explicit as the research is based on a qualitative study. However, the analysis and the study would bring fruits to the school it is conducted in.**

### *Implications in the classroom*

1. As we have already discussed how children are constantly engaged in representing their world and interpreting others' worlds, hence, it is important that they are given opportunities in the class to explore imaginative play and drawings. It is through their drawing and play that they invent written symbols for themselves. It is imperative that children are given ample opportunities to dwell into their experiences, recreate them, relive them and present them to others using different symbolic representations. We do talk about art integrated learning these days involving art and craft, singing, dancing, theatre, etc, but they are rather treated as co-curricular activities. As educators, teacher-educators, curriculum developers and parents, we must realize that it is the creative abilities of children to draw upon their experiences which help them develop holistically. Krishna Kumar, has very rightly said that talk is a basic means of learning and consolidating learning. Different symbolic representations like drawing, imaginative play and early forms of writing, are all food for enabling rich social talk among children.
2. During the discourse of the discussion, we discussed how imaginative play, drawing, social talk and writing are all part of the unified process, but when it comes to representation, writing is best viewed amongst all. Also, the schooling system requires children to adopt writing as their preferred mode of expression. Hence, facilitators can draw linkages between the print and their different symbolic tools like imaginative play, drawing and talk. Collaborating different symbolic tools together would help children reach the early forms of writing in a more easeful manner rather than adopting the path of rote memorization and learning the alphabets and spelling, etc.
3. Dyson talks about an important implication in the classroom. The discussion revolves around how imaginative play, social talk, drawing and writing are all important in the child's development. It is rather a unified process. However, as facilitators it is important to help children reflect on the various symbols that they are using to represent their experiences. For instance, when children draw, at times they may not feel the need to explain or to talk about their drawing. Teachers can encourage children to talk about their drawings. As Langer pens it down that talk is an irresistible desire and as soon as we talk, we encounter

the stream of symbolic processes. Hence, teachers must enable children to talk about not just their drawings but also simple objects and things they see around them like butterflies, puddle, soil, etc. It is essential to empower them with different symbolic tools but at the same time, drawing distinction between them is also important.

4. One of the most important implications is creating a space where children have access to rich materials which are food for talk, thoughts and the need to express themselves. Teachers can try to bring in stories, poems, songs, art and craft material to the classroom space. It would not just present different kinds of experiences to the children, but will also stimulate them to come up with a response and an understanding in the most authentic ways. With time and experience, their expression will be nurtured and they will begin using various symbolic tools to present their worlds to each other.

Materials can be very empowering. Each one of us relates to the story in a different way. Each one of us listens to the song in a yet different way. We hum different parts of it. Each one of us finds beauty in different stanzas of the same poem. Each one of us links a piece of art to different aspects of our life. Hence, different materials enable creative juices to flow and open the gates to self-expression, and it is right then when the need to use different symbolic tools to shape our worlds and to interpret and understand others', comes in.

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