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Pathshala Bheetar aur Bahar is Azim Premji University's quarterly publication on school education. The publication seeks to provide practice-based content for pre-primary, primary and upper-primary government school teachers across the country. It is a platform for them to share perspectives, experiences, reflections and classroom processes that reflect effective pedagogy aligned with NEP 2020, NCF-SE and NCF-FS. First published in Hindi, it is also translated into English and Kannada.

- Names have been changed to protect children's identities.
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Editorial

Teaching and learning are both continuous and simultaneous processes. In school, these two processes run in parallel. One end of this continuum is connected to peer learning, that is, students learning from one another, while the other is connected to teachers learning from their students and colleagues. Reflective teachers learn something or the other from their students every day. This is where they get ideas for developing better teaching plans, and their pedagogy improves. In this context, if we look at the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023, this is what it says about effective pedagogy in the classroom: The key elements that enable effective pedagogy in the classroom include teachers ensuring respect and care as the core while building positive teacher-student relationships; providing scaffolding and differentiated instruction; providing opportunities for independent and collaborative work and giving meaningful feedback, among others. (3.3.3 pp 86-88)

These simple and seemingly easy aspects of teaching are the most critical, and for these to become an integral part of the teaching process, it is important that we revisit and reflect on them repeatedly. These aspects of effective pedagogy continue to emerge in many different forms in articles published in *Pathshala*, making each issue a practical and valuable resource for you, our readers.

This September issue brings you several articles on effective pedagogy. You will find important articles on the teaching of literary genres, the demonstration model for effective teaching, gender and social discrimination in the classroom, the usefulness of the inquiry method in EVS teaching, the importance of asking questions, the role of 'exit tickets' in science teaching, and strategies for classroom management. In addition to these, in the 'In the Spotlight' section, you can read about the experiences of a teacher from Uttarakhand. 'Pages from Teachers' Diaries' features classroom experiences of teachers from three different states, while the 'In the Company of Books' introduces two important books that can support classroom teaching. Finally, 'Let's Do Some Activities' includes some interesting and useful activities that can be carried out in the classroom.

We hope you find this issue useful.

With best wishes,

Pratibha Katiyar
Chief Editor

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Awareness of Writing Styles and Literary Genres in the Language Classroom

Manoj Kumar

In the language classrooms of upper primary and higher secondary, teaching diverse literary genres and writing styles has always been challenging due to the dominance of traditional thinking and methods. This article addresses this challenge by exploring critical pedagogical questions: What defines various genres and styles? How can educators effectively analyse their distinct characteristics, limitations, potential, and differences? Finally, why is it essential to 'deliberately' teach these? This article takes into account recent educational research and contemporary curriculum recommendations to answer these questions.

Currently, the main challenge in language teaching is ensuring students learn to read and write in primary classes and are able to utilise these skills in subsequent classes and become self-reliant in their professional lives. Many significant educational programmes are focused on this goal. It is perhaps because of this that there is little discussion about what students want to gain from language education in their future classes once they have learnt to read and write in the language of the school.

Suppose a Class VI student has mastered the skills of reading with comprehension, and now they have to read a story by Premchand from their textbook. Does this student need a teacher to read the story? If they can read and understand the story independently, what is the significance of it being taught to them in class? And assuming that all the students in the class can read and understand the text independently as per the curriculum expectations, why should class time be spent on teaching the story?



Figure 1: Students pick and read what interests them.



Figure 2: Reading opportunities help children build fluency.

> **What kind of expressions are possible in a one-act play or drama that are not possible to bring out in stories? In what ways are the stories of writers like Premchand similar to, or different from, traditional folktales?**

There can be several answers to these questions. For example, students find reading stories interesting, and reading interesting material develops their reading habit. Not only that, not all Class VI students can fluently read on their own with comprehension. They often falter while reading. In such a situation, providing opportunities in class to read stories gradually helps them learn to read fluently. Another possible answer is that reading and listening to stories motivate students to live successful and ethical lives. Often, in stories, bad deeds lead to bad consequences, and good deeds lead to good consequences. Stories also reaffirm to us that no matter how difficult life may be, consistent effort can help achieve anything. It can be argued that if the objective is to develop the habit of reading or to learn to read fluently, then instead of discussing stories in class, it would be better to encourage students to borrow books from the library and read on their own.

Secondly, modern stories differ from traditional moral tales, and they are not motivational in the traditional sense. For instance, in *Malhar,* the Class VIII Hindi textbook published by NCERT, there is a story titled *'Do Gauraiya'* (Two Sparrows) written by Bhisham Sahni. The story revolves around a trivial complication in everyday life. One day, two sparrows arrive from somewhere and build a nest on the blade of a ceiling fan, and despite the father's persistent efforts, they do not leave the house. It is not that there is no moral dilemma or message in the story. Multiple messages can be inferred from it, and they can be debated, but there is no hurry to arrive at a moral resolution by addressing the moral dilemma. From this perspective, the structure of this story differs from the *Panchatantra* stories and other traditional moral tales. This is just one example; there are many more in class VI, VII and VIII textbooks. There is no reason to believe that these stories have been included as course material to impart moral education or improve fluent reading. Perhaps there are other purposes behind their selection.

Identifying the structural characteristics of literary genres and styles

The objectives behind compiling works of various literary genres and themes in the textbooks for classes V - VIII can be gauged by looking at the structure of the chapters mentioned in their prefaces. The rationale behind this selection can also be understood by looking at the list of curricular objectives stated in the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023. In this list, one of the objectives of language education pertains to the skill of recognising and appreciating literary genres, such as poetry, story, and essay, and writing styles, such as narrative and descriptive. Distinguishing between them means recognising their characteristics, potential, and limitations as well. For example: What is it that can be expressed in a story but cannot be expressed in a one-act play or drama? What kind of expressions are possible in a one-act play or drama that are not possible to bring out in stories? In what ways are the stories of writers like Premchand similar to, or different from, traditional folktales?

The point of recognising the characteristics of genres is not simply to outline the nature of the themes commonly expressed in these genres. Although the peculiarities of themes are also important, it is also necessary to understand and explain the structural peculiarities of the genres.

Genre structure refers to the order in which the parts of a work written in a particular genre fall, and what each part does. For example, in a 'story', we narrate certain events that happened in the life of a person or some people, and we do something similar in a 'memoir'.

Students can strengthen their understanding of genre-based structure by reading two works from *Malhar,* NCERT textbook for Class VI, to compare their structures –*'Haar ki Jeet'* by Sudarshan and 'Goal', Major Dhyan Chand's memoir.

Teaching genre-based specificities: Deliberately or spontaneously?

The recently published secondary-level textbooks by NCERT offer a few opportunities to draw attention to genre-based nuances. The exercise lists at the end of all chapters include practice activities like *Kahaani ki Rachna* (story composition). These activities draw attention to the creative aspects of story writing. Imparting an understanding of genre-based nuances is one of the several objectives for the secondary level. The curricular and textbook perspective is also such that students should discover the distinctiveness of genres while engaging with the texts, first on their own, and later, in groups. The textbooks and curriculum are not in favour of deliberately imparting the genre-related knowledge accumulated over generations. It is one thing to expose students to literary forms and genres and assume that they will recognise their specificities on their own. But it is altogether a different thing to explain these forms and genres through well-planned teaching activities. The secondary level Hindi textbooks, recently published by NCERT, adopt the former perspective. This is evident from the fact that the questions related to genres and forms in the exercise sections have been developed with this first perspective.

About composition-related questions, the preface of the textbook *Malhar* states: 'Literary composition—this question will provide students with the opportunity to focus on the genre-specific characteristics and structural aspects of literature.' (p. ix). In this context, it is worth noting that in the current educational discourse, a section of educationists deems the deliberate teaching of all



Figure 3: As students progress through their school education, they need to learn about various writing genres.

forms of literature, including stories and various genres of writing, to be necessary.

As students progress through their school education, they need to learn about various kinds of writing genres. An introduction to these genres helps in reading and writing. Unfortunately, schools emphasise just one or two writing genres—for instance, to document one's past experience on the basis of memory, to write a commentary, or to write something based on observations. For example, in a language class, students might be asked to write an essay on their experiences of visiting a relative or going on a vacation during summer. Alternatively, students might be allowed to wander around the school campus for a while, and upon returning, be asked to record in their notebooks what they have observed outside. These activities are neither meaningless nor unnecessary. However, from the viewpoint of the writing genre, we are providing students with the opportunity to document only memory- and observation-based accounts. If the other essential genres and writing styles are not taught deliberately in schools, students from families and neighbourhoods with limited culture and resources for reading and writing are particularly left behind. For this reason, Sydney Schools,[1] with the rationale of inclusive education, emphasised the deliberate teaching of genres. And with these same arguments, we can also understand the need for deliberate teaching of various literary genres.

The deliberate teaching of genres means consciously introducing students to diverse composition genres and assisting them in achieving mastery over them. Different subjects, like history, science, and civics, involve the use of different composition genres and writing styles. For instance, science mainly involves using composition genres, such as definitions, examples, classification, causality, and process descriptions. Whereas history primarily uses composition genres such as chronological description of facts and events, corroboration of facts by cross-referencing multiple pieces of evidence, and causality. For students to succeed in secondary, higher secondary, and further studies, they must be provided with opportunities to gain proficiency in all these writing techniques.

If we consider the deliberate teaching of genres, it would begin with classroom discussions on literary genres. However, beyond literature, it would also need to be addressed in primary, secondary, and higher secondary language classrooms. For instance, which aspects of language require attention in a text describing a process; if we are describing an event, then how to connect different parts of the text; if one is to write a critical essay on a topic with different scholarly opinions, then how to organise the text; and so on. Such topics can be the subjects of language teaching.

> **In the current educational discourse, a section of educationists deems the deliberate teaching of all forms of literature, including stories and various genres of writing, to be necessary.**

Knowledge of various genres of literary and non-literary writing facilitates the reading of a work. When students sit down to read a memoir, they align their expectations according to that genre. They know that they should not hold the same expectations from a memoir as they would from a story. Similarly, they should not hold the same expectations from a literary story as they do from historical writing, even when the story is based on historical events or characters.

Moving away from reading, when it comes to writing, they should know that in memoir writing, they have the liberty to express their personality, but as a surveyor, they should focus less on themselves and more on their subject. This kind of practice is necessary for academic success in primary, secondary, and higher secondary grades.

Identifying genre-based specificities and emerging metalinguistic awareness

Another rationale behind the deliberate teaching of genres and paying deliberate attention to writing methods and genres is that it develops metacognitive and metalinguistic abilities. Metacognition means to take cognisance of cognition. We typically take cognisance of an object or a subject. When cognition itself becomes the subject of cognition, then that state is referred to as metacognition. Similarly, metalinguistic refers to using language to talk [and/or think] about no other subject than language itself.

Scholars in the Vygotskian tradition who reflect upon education, especially language education, state that language is like a glass window through which we look at the world and take cognisance of it. However, when we step back and take cognisance of the glass itself, we reach a second level of cognition. This is the metacognitive state. In the field of language, it is referred to as the metalinguistic state. When we turn our gaze back at the

glass, we often find that it is not entirely transparent and colourless. The tint of the glass also plays a role in constructing the reality of the world and its colour that we see outside. In a similar manner, the meaning of a character or an event described in a text also depends on the genre in which we compose it.

As students progress from the early and primary levels to secondary and higher secondary levels, the expectations of the syllabi, with respect to learning-teaching and reflection, move towards achieving cognitive as well as metacognitive levels. This happens in all subjects. In mathematics, we move from arithmetic to algebra. In science too, students get exposed to more abstract concepts. Similarly, in language learning and teaching, there is a need to advance to metacognitive and metalinguistic levels alongside the cognitive level. In this endeavour, the deliberate study of literary genres and writing methods is essential.

> **As students progress through their school education, they need to learn about various kinds of writing genres. An introduction to these genres helps in reading and writing.**

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[1] Montessori school network in Kerala. https://sydneyschools.co.in/

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Questioning as a Pedagogical and Assessment Strategy

Pooja Arya

When thoughtful questioning is combined with adequate wait time, classrooms become more supportive, reflective, and participatory spaces. Such practices not only improve the quality of responses but also help ensure that every child gets an opportunity to find their voice within the classroom.

One morning, a Class II teacher entered the classroom while the children were seated together in a circle on the floor. Without saying a word, she placed a dry leaf in the centre of the circle and invited the children to observe it closely. Instead of beginning the Environmental Science (EVS) lesson with definitions or reading from the textbook, she asked:

'Why do you think this leaf fell from the tree?'

The classroom immediately became alive.

'Because it dried up.'

'Maybe there was a strong wind.'

'It became old.'

'My grandmother says leaves fall before new ones grow.'

Soon, children began talking to one another, comparing ideas and recalling what they had seen around their homes and on the school grounds. Some children spoke in Kannada, others mixed Hindi and English. One child picked up the leaf and said softly, 'Maybe the tree does not need it anymore.'

In that moment, the classroom was not merely answering a teacher's question. Children were observing, thinking, imagining, connecting, discussing, and learning together.

This is the power of questioning.

Questioning beyond 'right answers'

In many classrooms, questioning is often used only to check whether children remember textbook information.

'What is the answer?'

'Who can tell?'

'What did we study yesterday?'

Such questions have their place, but when classrooms depend only on recall questions, learning remains limited to memorisation. Often, only a few confident children answer, while others remain silent.

However, questioning can become much more than checking correctness. It can become:

- A teaching strategy
- A formative assessment practice
- A way of giving agency to children
- A tool for participation and dialogue

Good questions invite children to think, explain, wonder, predict, connect, and even disagree respectfully.



Figure 1: Responding to questions also gives children the opportunity to explain their thinking.

Questioning as pedagogy

Questioning is one of the most powerful pedagogical tools available to teachers. A meaningful question can spark curiosity, encourage discussion, and help children connect classroom learning with everyday experiences.

For instance, in a Class IV mathematics classroom, instead of directly explaining subtraction with borrowing, the teacher writes on the board: 'You have ₹100. You buy things worth ₹78. How will you find out how much money is left?'

Children begin responding in different ways: 'I will subtract 78 from 100', 'I will first take away 70', 'I will count forward from 78', 'I can use my fingers', etc. Rather than immediately identifying the 'correct' method, the teacher asks further questions, such as, 'Can there be different ways to solve the same problem?' or 'Why do you think your method works?' Slowly, the classroom shifts from simply finding answers to discussing strategies, reasoning, and understanding.

In such classrooms, questioning itself becomes the teaching process. Thoughtful questions help activate children's prior knowledge, build curiosity, encourage participation, and deepen conceptual understanding. They also create opportunities for children to explain their thinking, listen to others, and connect lessons with their own experiences. When classrooms become spaces of dialogue, reflection, and discussion rather than one-way instruction, children participate more actively and meaningfully in learning.

> **Questioning is not merely a classroom routine. It is a pedagogy that encourages thinking, participation, and dialogue.**

Questioning as a formative assessment strategy

Questioning also helps teachers understand children's learning continuously during classroom interactions. This is formative assessment – an assessment that supports learning while it is happening.

For example, during story reading, a teacher asks: 'Why do you think the boy hid the letter?'

Some children answer confidently. Others struggle to explain. One child says: 'Because he was scared.'

The teacher follows up: 'What in the story makes you think he was scared?'

Now, the teacher is not only checking whether children know the story, but she is also trying to understand whether they can interpret emotions, use clues from the text, and explain their reasoning.

Similarly, in a science lesson, if children say, 'Plants eat soil', the teacher immediately understands a misconception that needs further discussion.

Through questioning, teachers can notice:

- What children already know
- What confuses them

Table 1: Some sample questions and how they support learning.

Questions that check recall	Questions that encourage thinking	Questions that connect with children's lives	Open-ended questions
They help children remember and retrieve previously learned information. These questions are useful for checking foundational knowledge. For example: • What is the capital of Karnataka? • What is 5 × 4?	These questions encourage children to explain their reasoning, justify their ideas, and explore different possibilities. For example: • How did you get this answer? • Why do you think this happened? • Can there be another way?	These questions value children's experiences and identities. For example: • Have you seen this in your village or neighbourhood? • What languages do people speak at home? • What happens during a water shortage in your area?'	Such questions encourage dialogue rather than a single correct answer and create space for multiple voices and ideas. For example: • What might happen next in the story? • What else could the character have done? • What do you notice in this picture?'

- How they are thinking
- Which children are participating
- Which children need support
- Whether teaching methods are working

In this sense, assessment is not limited to tests, marks, or worksheets. Every day, classroom conversations can become assessment opportunities (*Table 1*).

Giving agency to children through questioning

In many classrooms, questioning remains fully controlled by the teacher. Teachers ask; children answer, but meaningful participation develops when children also begin asking questions of their own.

Children's questions show curiosity, imagination, and engagement. Yet many children hesitate to ask questions because they fear being laughed at, corrected, or ignored. A classroom that values student agency encourages children to wonder aloud.

In a class V, after reading a chapter on migration, a child asked:

'Why do people leave their villages even when they do not want to?' The teacher paused the lesson and invited discussion. Soon, children began sharing stories about parents working in cities, seasonal work, and family movement during drought. The discussion became richer because the classroom followed a child's question, not just the textbook.

Giving agency means recognising that children are not passive receivers of knowledge. They are thinkers, observers, and meaning-makers. Teachers can encourage agency by:

- Appreciating children's questions
- Creating 'question walls' or 'wonder corners'
- Allowing children to frame questions for peers
- Encouraging pair discussions
- Inviting multiple answers
- Asking children to explain their thinking
- Allowing children to disagree respectfully

When children realise their questions matter, participation increases naturally.

Questioning and wait time in classrooms

Questioning plays an important role in creating active and participatory classrooms. However, children often hesitate to respond when they fear giving the 'wrong' answer or feel pressured to respond immediately. Meaningful classroom questioning is not only about asking questions but also about creating spaces where children feel comfortable thinking, reflecting, and responding.

For example, during a discussion on weather, a child may say, 'The sun is hiding behind the clouds today.' The teacher can take a cue from this and respond, 'It does look like that, doesn't it? The sun is still there, but the clouds are blocking some of its light. What differences do you notice when the sun is covered by clouds?' The teacher can then introduce ideas such as *sunlight, cloud cover,* and *temperature*.

In this way, the teacher builds on the child's everyday language and observations, helping them move gradually towards more formal scientific concepts. Such responses encourage participation, validate children's ideas, and help build confidence in expressing their thoughts.

Equally important is the role of wait time. Often, teachers ask questions and expect instant answers. In this process, only a few quick responders participate while many others remain silent. Thinking requires time. Children need a pause to organise their thoughts, connect ideas with prior experiences, and prepare their responses.



Figure 2: A classroom that values student agency encourages children to wonder aloud.

Allowing a few seconds of wait time after asking a question can make classroom participation more inclusive. It gives all children, especially quieter learners, an opportunity to think and respond at their own pace. Over time, children become more confident in sharing ideas, asking questions, and engaging in discussions.

When thoughtful questioning is combined with adequate wait time, classrooms become more supportive, reflective, and participatory spaces. Such practices not only improve the quality of responses but also help ensure that every child gets an opportunity to find their voice within the classroom.

Practices that make a difference

Teachers do not need expensive materials or special training to make questioning meaningful. Small, everyday changes can transform classroom interactions.

Some useful practices include:

- Asking more 'why' and 'how' questions
- Encouraging more than one answer
- Giving wait time before responses
- Asking children to explain their thinking
- Connecting questions with local experiences
- Encouraging peer questioning
- Appreciating effort and curiosity
- Allowing multilingual discussions
- Creating spaces where children can ask questions without fear

Try this in your classroom

Activity: Children become question makers

After completing a story, lesson, or activity, divide children into small groups. Tell them that for the day they will become 'question makers' instead of only answer givers.

> **Good questions invite children to think, explain, wonder, predict, connect, and even disagree respectfully.**

Ask each group to prepare different kinds of questions related to the lesson, such as:

- A question that helps us remember
- A question that makes us think deeply
- A 'why' or 'how' question
- A question connected to everyday life
- A question that has more than one possible answer

Give children time to discuss and frame their questions together. Encourage them to use any language they are comfortable with while thinking and discussing.

Next, groups can exchange questions with one another. Instead of focusing only on correct answers, encourage children to explain their thinking:

- Why do you think so?
- Can there be another answer?
- What made you say that?

Teachers may notice that some children who usually remain quiet become more confident when they are invited to ask questions rather than only answer them.

This activity helps children understand that learning is not only about giving correct answers. Asking thoughtful questions, listening to others, and discussing different ideas are also important parts of learning.

Conclusion

Questioning is not merely a classroom routine. It is a pedagogy that encourages thinking, participation, and dialogue. It is also a powerful form of formative assessment through which teachers understand children's learning continuously. Most importantly, questioning can give agency to children by valuing their voices, experiences, ideas, and curiosity.



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Understanding Gender-Based Discrimination

Jai Shekhar

A teacher used selected books on specific themes to help students develop sensitivity towards gender-based discrimination in school. The teacher wanted to know students' views on the subject; employ effective strategies to refine students' understanding using storybooks; and to ascertain the nature and impact of these book-based efforts on the cognitive process of the students.

Gender-based discrimination remains a topic that is largely excluded from classroom discussions, despite its pervasive presence in daily life. When I look back, I am reminded of my mother, who involved me in all the household chores. I do not have sisters, so I learnt household work, such as making large *Mandna* wall art, idols and toys from cow dung, knitting, cooking, and so on, from my grandmother. Sometimes, I was ridiculed by my family members for doing this, but this did not deter me since I was interested in learning these skills.

Today, when I speak to my students, I feel that beliefs rooted in gender-based discrimination have a strong grip on them. Not just boys, but girls also share that boys neither know nor attempt to do the work which is typically assigned to girls. Thus, it is imperative to build their understanding of this issue. They should be introduced to stories that offer opportunities for discussion and dialogue that can bring openness to their thinking and broaden their perspectives.



Figure 1: The poster on gender bias which Class V students created.

The primary objectives of working with stories

- To discuss gender-based discrimination/inequality with students and to understand their views
- To share books on this subject with them, and to support them in thinking, reflecting, and deepening their understanding; and
- To understand the impact of these book-based conversations on them

The group

Around 20 students from Class V at a primary government school are part of my group. All the students are from a rural background. Their home language is either Hindi or Awadhi, and their parents are barely literate. Their only connection with printed material is the school textbooks. However, library activities, lately, have enabled them to read several books and have also nurtured their interest and understanding of the written word.

Detailed process

Although regular poetry and storytelling sessions had introduced the students to books and fostered their love for reading, I was apprehensive about initiating a conversation with the students on gender inequality.

Awareness of gender roles

I thought that it would be appropriate to start the conversation with the story '*Na Aasman Gira, Na Chaand Baukhlaya*'[1] (The sky did not fall, nor did the moon go berserk). Jamuna, the protagonist of the story, performs all the household chores, but due to a certain belief, she is forbidden from touching the *chak* (potter's wheel). As the story nears its end, she breaks the norm. I tried to understand what other norms and restrictions in our cultural context have been imposed because of gender identity. A few things came to light. For instance, there are restrictions on girls with respect to wearing certain clothes, playing with boys, going to the market without a veil (*naqab*), and touching items in shops. The students shared their thoughts openly.

In the next session, students were asked to list activities intended exclusively for boys and girls. Based on their list, it was apparent that boys are still not involved in household chores, which gradually reinforces and strengthens their idea of masculinity. This becomes the primary cause of gender discrimination. According to students, sweeping and cleaning the house, washing dishes and clothes, are all considered the work of girls. Apart from household chores, any other work, which involves going to the market, is restricted for girls.

Understanding gender stereotyping

I chose a new book, '*Guthli Toh Pari Hai*'[2] (Guthli Has Wings). The unique feature of this book is that Guthli loves travelling. Guthli loves collecting seeds and flowers and cycling. No one stops Guthli from doing these either. However, there is something else that Guthli loves to do. Guthli wants to wear their sister's frock, but their parents and siblings do not approve of this. This opened up a new dimension for our discussion, in which we sought to trace the imprint of gender inequality not only on the work we do, but also on our freedom to think and choose what we like. For this, I read the book out slowly and tried to understand what the students thought of Guthli's behaviour. Should Guthli have worn a frock? Should Guthli's mother have helped Guthli? The students felt that Guthli's behaviour of wearing a frock was not appropriate.

Discussion alone does not make the atmosphere particularly active or lively, which is why I incorporated two activities. First, students who were good at writing were asked to write a letter to one of the five characters in the story, while those less comfortable with writing could draw a picture of a gift for Guthli. Along with the drawing, they had to write a line or two explaining why they had chosen a particular gift for Guthli.

Students wrote letters addressed to Guthli, and the child's mother, father, brother, and sister.

What students thought and wrote:

- In his letter to Guthli's father, Ayan wrote that he should explain to Guthli that he is a boy and should remain one, whereas Arvind spoke about the importance of living freely. This helped me understand the students' prejudices and their thoughts in general.
- In the concluding lines of his letter, Arvind wrote, 'If you stop him over his clothes today, tomorrow you will impose new restrictions, and then Guthli will never be able to understand what freedom means.'
- Kranti wrote to Guthli's sister, explaining, 'If Guthli dreamt of becoming a fairy and wore your new frock, you shouldn't have scolded him, because he is younger than you. You should have explained things to him instead. If I were in your place, I would have given my clothes to Guthli.'

- Arun drew a bicycle and wrote that since Guthli loved riding one, he would gift Guthli a bicycle.

The students participating in the discussion interpreted Guthli's character in their own unique ways. The main objective of this activity was to help students understand Guthli as a person and to draw their attention to people like Guthli.

> **Context-appropriate stories and books are most useful in facilitating substantive discussions on serious issues like gender inequality.**

The understanding deepens

To carry forward the conversation started with Guthli, I selected a new story titled *Prashant Bhaiya*.[3]

Before reading the story, I asked the students to make a list of toys and things they play with. I observed a significant difference between the toys of boys and girls. While girls played with dolls, teddy bears, and kitchen sets, the boys, apart from cricket and hockey, were happy with toys like racing cars and toy guns. Prashant Bhaiya's story somewhere resonated with the children's own experiences, as they too played games like doctor-patient, teacher-student, and house (*ghar-ghar*). Prashant Bhaiya loved playing *House*, which his mother did not approve of. When his mother bought him a toy car, he decorated it with flowers. This part of the story was a great opportunity for discussion. I asked the students why his mother disliked his playing *House*, and what they would have thought if they were in her place. Was it wrong of him to decorate the car with flowers? Through earlier discussions, the students had begun to realise that gender discrimination, even if not always visible on the surface, has a deep presence around us. When we discussed games, I realised that this aspect of games was not immune to the gender issue either. Some students supported Prashant, while others continued to side with his mother.

The story *Prashant Bhaiya* unpacked several layers of our understanding. Until now, I had discussed topics such as behaviour, clothing, preferences, and sports with the students, and they were beginning to understand the subject.

It was time now for a story titled 'Super Hero Aadya.'[4] Aadya studies in a school in Singapore, where she encounters gender inequality at multiple levels and also strongly voices her opposition in school. My students understood Aadya's perspective, the support she received from her mother, and all the key issues addressed in the story.

Awareness of gendered work

During the discussion the following day, students were asked to list activities traditionally associated with girls but have been adopted as professions by boys. Similarly, they had to list activities that girls were once forbidden from doing but have now embraced as livelihoods. To make the activity more engaging after the lists were made, students were asked to draw pictures of these



Figure 2: Students represented gender-based roles in their illustrations.

activities as well. When asked which activities boys are stopped from doing? Mukhtar replied that boys are not actually stopped; instead, they are teased with remarks like: 'He is behaving like a girl.' We created some taglines such as: 'Boys get teased when they play with dough' and 'Girls are forbidden from dreaming', and so on.

> **As a teacher, I realised that patiently listening to what the students have to say is a crucial part of building their understanding of difficult topics.**

In the next session, the class was divided into two groups. The task for one group was to list the activities their fathers performed throughout the day, apart from their professional work, while the other group had to make a list of their mothers' activities. Then, they had to make illustrations of these. Through this activity, we sought to understand whether or not gender-based division of work continues in adulthood. We learned that, alongside routine chores, Shoaib's mother takes the goats for grazing, Mukhtar's mother cleans and cooks fish, and some mothers even work in other people's homes doing dishes, sweeping, and cleaning. Apart from caring for their children, some mothers go to gather firewood also.

Based on our previous conversations, the students reached a level where they could understand and perceive gender inequality primarily in terms of the division of work and think that perhaps this division might fade away as they grow up. Over time, they too may come to understand how this inequality persists into adulthood.

The discussion and activity were highly encouraging. During the session, the students themselves asked why children are restricted from doing specific tasks when adult men and women do all kinds of work. Creating a poster of all the work that students do was also very exciting.

Understanding gender beyond division of work

All the previous stories had been introduced through read-aloud sessions. This time, I presented a new story via an audio recording. The students thoroughly enjoyed the story, which was presented through voice modulation and soft background music. The story is called *'Mitwa'* [5] (a girl's name). I chose this story to challenge the notion that there are certain tasks girls simply could not do. While listening to the story repeatedly, we identified lines that reflected gender bias in some way or another. We found ten such sentences.

Students also made illustrations for Mitwa. The illustrations depicted Mitwa's entire family working in the fields. In some drawings, Mitwa was seen riding a bicycle and driving a tractor. Had we not discussed this topic over the past several days, these nuances would not have appeared in the drawings.

Key results of this process

- Shift in mindset: During this journey with books, I observed that the students who initially supported the parents of Guthli while reading *Guthli Toh Pari Hai*, began supporting Guthli by the time we reached the story about *Prashant Bhaiya*.
- Birth of new ideas: The thoughts that were taking shape began to translate into the students' lives



Figure 3: A student's drawing shows women working in the fields alongside men.

as well. For instance, when there was a wedding in Mukhtar's family, he got a *mehndi* design made on his palm. His *mehndi* had the names of his friends. When he returned to school, no one teased him about it.

- Developing a spirit of working together: Previously, boys and girls did not work together while creating posters for poems. However, this time, they worked together in teams, without any hesitation, completing their tasks with ease.
- Moving towards a new understanding: I was teaching translation from Hindi to English and Sanskrit. When I wrote 'Sita' on the blackboard, a student completed the sentence by saying, 'Sir, Sita is studying!' In contrast, when another girl used it in a clichéd sentence, 'Sita is cooking food', voices from the class immediately echoed, asking, 'Is Sita destined to keep cooking here too? Let her study, just like Mitwa.'
- Classroom seating arrangement: Previously, girls and boys sat on separate sides of the classroom, but now they sit together without hesitation.

The need for a library

Context-appropriate stories and books are most useful in facilitating substantive discussions on serious issues like gender inequality. Having books on these topics available in our school libraries makes this process significantly easier. While I conducted 20 to 25 sessions on this subject, I paid special attention to diversifying library activities. This helped maintain the interest among students and allowed them to express themselves openly. In this way, a library offers opportunities to hold group discussions, listen to one another's ideas, and shape one's own ideas.

As a teacher, I realised that patiently listening to what the students have to say is a crucial part of building their understanding of difficult topics. They also need to be given space and opportunities to think, reflect, and understand. Teachers should not impose their views on students; instead, they should be given the space to gradually build their own worldviews. The greater the sensitivity and objectivity with which a teacher presents an issue to students, the greater is the clarity with which students form their own views.

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Inquiry-Based Method Makes Learning Exciting and Engaging

Mukesh Chand Sharma

How children learn is based on their interactions with the environment when given the opportunity to observe the world, ask questions, stay inquisitive, gather and analyse information, and present findings. Such processes make students active, curious, and participatory. This article highlights these experiences using the inquiry-based method.

To explore how the inquiry-based method works and how effective it is for learning, I chose the Chapter, 'Animals and Birds: Our Companions,' from the Class V Environmental Studies (EVS) curriculum. Students of classes IV and V were involved in this project. They participated enthusiastically, gathered information from their surroundings, created materials, made and wrote down their observations, and in the end, all this work was presented at a children's research fair.

I based this plan on specific objectives related to the subject, such as having the students explore and connect with their natural and socio-cultural environment and understand the interdependence in the environment through observation and experiences. I also ensured that the students had opportunities to learn from their prior knowledge and first-hand experiences.

Learning Outcomes for engaging with the lesson

Learning Outcomes	Expected work from students
Identifying animals and birds found in the surroundings.	Identifying animals and birds based on their general characteristics.
Classifying animals and birds.	Grouping them based on appearance, habitat, diet, and other characteristics.
Observing and documenting information.	Observing objects, activities, and places during field visits; recording information and identifying patterns.
Understanding the relationship between animals, birds, and human life.	Understanding the usefulness of local animals and birds in human life and the nature of the relationship with them.

> **Working in small groups, the students observed 10 to 11 different bird species. They recorded details about each bird's name, colour, shape, beak and claw structure, call, behaviour, and habitat.**

A journey of discovery and learning

1. Initial discussion and gathering information about animals and birds

The teaching process began with a discussion with students about animals and birds they had seen around them and all that they knew about them. Students were asked to gather information from elders regarding the names of six to seven birds, their characteristics, and their roles in the environment. Most students came back with the names and characteristics of the birds but had no information about their roles in the environment. The students only knew that birds eat insects. For instance, Manjari wrote that ducks eat insects in the river and that the *papiha* bird (hawk-cuckoo) drinks rainwater by tilting its beak upwards during the monsoon. Most students agreed with this, as they too had heard this. The question, 'Then how does it survive without water for the rest of the year?' made them think. They were then informed that this was merely a popular myth. In reality, the *papiha* bird drinks water just like any other bird. Students were encouraged to observe and validate this information.

2. Listing and classifying familiar animals and birds

In the next stage, students were asked to create a list of the animals and birds they were familiar with. The



Figure 1: Students on a nature walk to observe birds.

discussion showed that these living creatures could be categorised into different groups. Kishan suggested classifying animals based on whether they eat meat or plants. Sarthak suggested dividing them into domestic and wild animals. The students suggested several such criteria. These observations were noted in a table.

Table 1. The worksheet created for classification of animals.

Students' classification	Basis of their classification
Vegetarian and meat-eating	Feeding habits
Wild and domestic	Habitat
Living on water, land or trees; living on both land and water	Habitat
Flying and non-flying	Movement
Living alone, in pairs, or groups	Behaviour

The students correctly classified most organisms based on their habitats. Some creatures were placed in more than one category when classifying on the basis of their feeding habits. For example, lizards were placed in two categories, namely, hunting animals and insect eaters. Manjari and Satakshi raised the question, 'Can a creature belong to more than one group?' Ambika shared that she had seen lizards near the light bulb, as it is easier to find insects there. To this, Manjari replied that it is not easier to catch insects there; rather, the lizard uses stealth to catch them. Therefore, this was a kind of hunting as well. Lions, wolves, and dogs were put under two categories: scavengers and hunters. One group placed ants in the category of scavengers, whereas no group placed vultures and crows in that list.

We had a discussion on the reasoning behind this classification. Based on their experience, the students suggested that eagles, hawks, and owls should be placed in the category of solitary creatures. Pigeons, sheep, and goats belong to the living-in-collective group category. However, it was challenging to clearly differentiate between creatures that live in pairs and groups. This discussion gave us the opportunity to understand that the behaviour of an organism can change according to the circumstances. This activity helped students in carrying out observations, comparisons, classification, presenting their arguments, and drawing conclusions based on their experiences.

3. Observing birds while exploring nature

When I told the students that they would be going on a nature walk to carefully observe birds, they got very excited. We discussed the aspects they would need to observe and the precautions to take. Working in small groups, the students observed 10 to 11 different bird

species. They recorded details of each bird: name, colour, shape, beak and claw structure, call, behaviour, and habitat.

During this activity, the students got to learn about birds like *darjin* (tailorbird) and *fakhta* (dove) as well. Some people from the village also got involved in this activity. A discussion was held with the students about what they saw, the new things they learned, and what they thought of this experience. Some mentioned that although they saw birds every day, they had not observed them as carefully before.

> **Students were asked to gather more information about the impact of chemical fertilisers and pesticides on vultures. Such exercises help them understand environmental changes.**

Table 2. A sample observation form

Name of Bird	Where did you spot it? (tree/ ground/ water/ in flight)	Description (size, colour, beak, claws, sound, behaviour)	Number (alone/ in pairs/ in a flock)
House Sparrow	Date: 23.01.2026, Afternoon, near a nest built on a fan in the school veranda	Size: 15 cm / Male / Head colour: grey; Belly and tail: white/grey; Beak: short Behaviour: Hopping, constantly flitting about, chirping/sound: chirp-chirp-chirr, chee-chee	Alone / Sometimes in a flock of 2–4

4. Sharing their experience

The students read out their experiences. Sujyoti shared: 'Today, we went from the school in pairs to the rest of the village for a nature walk. We wrote down the names of all the birds we saw or could recall. We learnt about the *Darjin* bird from our teacher. It is called 'tailorbird' in English. We had a lot of fun; I am very happy.'

Each student described in detail a bird familiar to them. To deepen their understanding of bird watching, I picked the old NCERT textbook *Rimjhim* and read the chapter called '*Hudhud*' (the Hoopoe), which begins with how the hoopoe got its crest. Very engagingly, it narrates the characteristics, living habits, and behaviour of the hoopoe. This helped students understand how to write about a bird in detail.



Figure 2: Students gathering information from village elders.

Sarthak had written: 'The parrot is green. Its beak is red in colour. It makes the sound '*taay taay*'. There is a red stripe on its neck. Parrots live in groups. People also keep them as pets. I do not like to see parrots in a cage. I like parrots flying freely. Its beak is small, and it has two wings. Female parrots lay eggs.'

Bhagwanti shared, 'There is a crest-like thing on the peacock's head. It has two eyes and two feet. It has a blue neck, because of which it is also called '*neelkanth*' (blue-throated). One wishes to hear its sweet voice all the time. Its feathers are green, blue, and yellow. The peacock dances when it rains.'

The discussion also veered into concerns about bird conservation and a safe environment for them. Sujyoti shared, 'In the summers, the villagers arrange water and food for the birds in the form of '*parinde*' (a local term for a bird feeder). We can set one up at the school as well, but there is no big tree here. In the village, birds are found in abundance around the big trees. Therefore, we should also plant trees.'

> **The fair was not merely an exhibition but a platform to share the entire journey of students' discovery, understanding, collaboration, and learning.**

5. Gathering information about birds from elders

Next, there was a discussion on what questions to ask elders in order to gather more information about birds. The students suggested several questions. Bhavna added an important question: 'Which birds have become less in number now?'

Related to this, two more questions emerged:

- Which birds were seen 15–20 years ago?
- If their numbers have declined, what are the reasons?

Based on information from his father, Kishan said, 'Vultures used to be seen quite frequently, and there were many crows too. But now vultures are hardly seen.' The students attributed this to the loss of trees and hunting. Their attention was drawn to the impact of chemical fertilisers and pesticides on vultures, and they were asked to gather more information about it. Such exercises give students an opportunity to understand environmental changes.

6. Survey of village animals

After birds, the students were asked to gather information about domestic animals in the village. Everyone readily agreed, and there was a conversation in which students could name the animals, but their knowledge regarding their numbers and other details was limited. So, to take it further, I asked a few questions:

- Approximately how many animals would there be in the village?
- Which animals are likely to be found in different households?
- What are the benefits of raising animals?

The students shared some estimates, but it became clear that there was a need to collect accurate information. Students offered some suggestions for gathering information and framed the necessary questions. A survey form was then created based on these questions.

Questions in the survey form:

- Name of the respondent:
- Do they rear animals?
- Names of the animals:
- Number of animals:
- What are they fed?
- Where are they kept?
- What is the purpose of keeping them?

Each group was provided with this survey form, and responsibilities for asking questions and recording responses were assigned. Areas were allocated to each group. Teachers also participated in two of the groups. It was decided that consent would be obtained from individuals before gathering information from them. Initially, some students felt hesitant, but gradually, they began to interact with ease.

While collecting information, the students explained the objective of the survey to the respondents. Upon returning to school, they prepared charts based on the collected data. The survey activity proved to be an effective means of developing skills such as question framing, communication skills, collaboration, data collection, and social engagement among the students.

Table 3. A sample chart based on the data.

Group: Manjari, Kishan, Classes IV and V, Date: 09.05.2026

Name of person	Do they have animals	Names of animals	Number of animals	What are they fed?	Where are they kept?	Purpose of rearing them?
Sahiri Dadi	Yes	Buffalo, Cow, \Calf (female)	3 2 2	Fodder, Livestock feed mix	In the enclosure	For milk
Suresh	Yes	Buffalo, Calf (male), Goat	3 3 2	Fodder, Livestock feed mix	In the enclosure	For milk; for manure; for sale
Asaram	Yes	Buffalo, Cow, Goat	2 2 5	Fodder, Livestock feed mix, Tree leaves	In the enclosure	For milk; for business; for manure

Children's research fair

The work done and information collected by the students were systematically displayed on charts. Throughout this participatory process, the students appeared enthusiastic and active. Teachers and students discussed the initiative with the Panchayat Elementary Education Officer (PEEO) with the aim of sharing it with parents and other teachers in the Panchayat. A decision to organise a children's research fair was taken.

Students documented the various activities and the conclusions drawn from them. They decided among themselves who all would present and then confidently presented their experiences, surveys, observations, and conclusions at the children's research fair. The fair was not merely an exhibition but a platform to share the entire journey of students' discovery, understanding, collaboration, and learning. The confidence resulting from it was clearly visible on their faces.

This teaching-learning process, based on the lesson 'Animals and Birds: Our Companions', demonstrated that EVS can be an effective medium for developing a scientific temper, sensitivity, and diverse life skills among students.

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Three Strategies for Classroom Management

Shatabdee Saikia

The author explains how she put into practice the three-step solution to classroom management recommended by Lee Canter in his book. The article describes the entire process that she has followed in her classroom; highlights what worked, what did not, and how her own understanding of putting this method to effective use improved.

This is my first time working with a school and students so closely. I mostly engage with children in different activities based on their needs. There are students with mixed learning levels, students who come from different backgrounds, and very often this causes a lot of chaos, as not all students can participate equally in the activities at the same time. Here, classroom management becomes the foundation for everything else to fall into place.

In looking for solutions, I read Lee Canter's *Behaviour Management Cycle*. Lee Canter is a world-renowned expert in classroom management, and the three steps of the cycle he proposes are: giving clear instructions, using behavioural narration to reinforce students positively and taking corrective action.

Suggested strategies

One thing that stayed with me about this three-step cycle is how structured and practical it is. It does not blame children. Instead, it makes the teacher reflect on how directions are given; how, through these directions, they can encourage other students; and how correction is handled through will, not force. Here is how I operationalised the strategies suggested in this cycle in my classroom, and it benefited both my students and me.

1. Giving clear directions

I would often tell the students: 'Start your work', 'Pay attention', 'Be quiet'. But after reading about this



Figure 1: Students happy to receive 'stars' for positive behaviour.

step, I realised that these were vague instructions that students usually did not pay attention to. So, I changed the way I put forward my instructions. Instead of saying 'Start your work', I started saying 'Take out your notebook, write today's date, let's not talk until we have finished, otherwise it will take us more time than is needed'. When I started being precise like this, I saw how it reduced unnecessary confusion and chaos. Giving explicit instructions made the students more engaged because they clearly understood what they were expected to do. Instead of wondering where to begin, they immediately started working. I feel this also happened because they understood that delaying the task would only make the activity take longer, which also encouraged them to settle down and work.

2. Using behavioural narration to positively reinforce students

Previously, when teaching, I tended to notice the ones who were talking, the ones who were not participating, and sometimes, they were also not letting the other students participate. My energy always went towards correcting them. But slowly I started changing that. I noticed that the more I tried to correct them, the more disengaged the children became, creating a negative atmosphere. I also realised that my tone would become more corrective than supportive or encouraging.

So, on reading about 'behavioural narration', I shifted my focus. Instead of asking students, 'Why are you talking?' or 'Please don't talk', I started saying 'I see Riya has already started writing' or 'I see Rahul sitting quietly and working'. Over time, I noticed that the more I 'narrated' their positive behaviours, the more the students felt encouraged to participate. I feel this mostly happens because when I narrate what the students are doing out loud, it also motivates others to be seen, which in turn pushes them to start/do their work. This method was simple and could be sustained for a long time. I initially doubted the usefulness of this method in my classroom, but it proved to be very effective.

> **One thing that stayed with me about this entire cycle is how structured and practical it is.**

Students are so used to being scolded or punished for not doing their work that they feel discouraged from even asking questions or talking to the teacher. A few students in Class II were initially really scared to come to me or even talk to me about studies. They just kept telling me that they cannot study and that they do not know anything.

When I started using clearer instructions and behavioural narration, something slowly changed. Instead of pointing out what they were not doing, I began acknowledging even the smallest effort they made. I started encouraging everyone through narration. This helped remove fear of failure or making mistakes among the students. When students gradually noticed that I was observing their efforts, they felt much safer.

It also helped rebuild their 'I am weak' identity. Many of these children had never heard their names in a positive context inside the classroom. Their names may have only been called out when they were being corrected, warned or compared. So, naturally, they began associating their identity with failure. Hearing their names in positive contexts gave them the visibility they always deserved, followed by the desire to learn.



Figure 2: A teacher talks to a student, creating a positive learning environment.

3. Taking corrective action

Another area I reflected on deeply is how I correct students. There were days when I felt tired, and I could not understand their behaviour. This would always make me frustrated, and I ended up giving instructions like 'Do your work' in a frustrated tone. But I realised that when correction comes from frustration, it becomes difficult for the students to understand, and they either get defensive or stop caring.

From Lee Canter's three-step cycle, I learnt to give the students ownership of their behaviour. I started saying things like, 'The instruction was to raise your hand before speaking; you chose to shout out, so you chose to miss one point. You can raise your hand for the next question.'

From what I have observed, I feel that this makes it clearer for the students to choose their own actions. It also reduces their defensive nature. When students feel blamed, they either give up on what they are doing or do not take a task seriously. But when they see it as a choice they make, they become more conscious of their actions.

> **Giving explicit instructions made the students more engaged because they clearly understood what they were expected to do.**

Through all this, I also realised that classroom discipline is not about controlling the students. It is more about teaching them about their actions and giving them the responsibility to control their own behaviour.

My reflections

When I reflect on my own classroom, these approaches have helped me handle my classroom in a clearer and calmer manner. It has helped me to reduce confusion and maintain a positive tone. I have mainly tried the behavioural narration approach with them, and along with the narration, I also do a small 'star game' where I write the names of the students and then give stars next to their names when they follow an instruction. The rule is simple: If they want a star, they follow the instruction, and if not, then they get no stars.

Even though such strategies as giving a 'star' might be good to manage a class, it is also important not to make the students depend on these strategies to do a certain task. If they are dependent on it, then they might rush to complete the task without being fully aware of what they are expected to do. It also sometimes leads to arguments between classmates, and they end up complaining. To prevent this, teachers should use rewards like a 'star' in a balanced way, where students' behaviour is managed with it, but at the same time, they learn how to control their behaviour even without it. According to me, such balance can be achieved if, on a few days, their behaviours are acknowledged verbally without the need for a star.

Lastly, what I personally take away from this approach is that classroom management starts with me and the clarity of my purpose, tone and consistency. Students are mostly not aware of these classroom management strategies because they are used to being punished when they make a mistake or do not follow instructions from the teacher.

Introducing Pinky Masi

When I made the classroom rules for classes I and II, I initially thought that explaining the rules to them once was enough. But in reality, none of them followed the rules. Later, I started talking to them about the rules daily. After these conversations, they were gradually able to understand what these rules were, but even after that, they broke the rules! I slowly realised that students did not know what would happen if they broke a rule.

This is when I introduced them to 'Pinky Masi' on the blackboard, a simple emoji that smiles when the students follow rules and instructions and becomes sad when they do not. I would discuss the rules and what would happen to Pinky Masi if they did not follow. I also told them that if Pinky Masi is sad, I feel sad too. I even gave a small backstory of Pinky Masi. This helped the students to slowly connect with the emoji because they did not want to make it or me sad. This strategy worked for a long period of time with the students of Class I, whereas the narration strategy has worked well with the students of Class II.

> **I understood that classroom management and a positive learning environment are not separate from teaching. They are, in fact, two important tools of effective pedagogy.**

'Hamumaan Karbo'

Three boys in Class II often found it difficult to concentrate during the class. They were always more interested in talking to each other or playing during the lessons and activities. When I started using behavioural narration, I gradually noticed a change in their participation. I would say things to their classmates like 'I can see Khileshwari has taken out her copy and started doing her work'; 'Raj seems excited to complete the work'; or 'Manvi is concentrating well on the activity'.



Figure 3: All students wanted stars and a happy Pinky Masi on the blackboard.

Whenever I gave these narrations, I would hear Savan, Lumesh, and Eshant whisper to each other, '*hamuman karbo'* (we will also do it in Chhattisgarhi). Soon after, they would take out their copies, books, or start participating in the activity. It became something they chose to do on their own instead of doing it because I directly told them. On one occasion, the behavioural narration was not working, so I used the star reward. They participated with all their focus and would happily say '*mola star milis'* (I got a star). I felt that this encouraged participation more than repeatedly telling them what to do. And most of them participate because they want to be appreciated too or have a star beside their names on the board. Ultimately, these strategies not only helped me manage the classroom but also created a space where students were willing to participate and engage.

Classroom management and pedagogy

These strategies have helped me with my pedagogical practices as well. I have been teaching mathematics, a subject that I also find really challenging and am often less confident about. In the beginning, I faced many difficulties in managing the classroom during the activities. There were some students who would follow my instructions and participate; others found it difficult to stay engaged. Managing students with different levels of participation and conducting activities was not easy. When I read the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* (NCF-SE) 2023, I understood that classroom management and a positive learning environment are not separate from teaching. They are, in fact, two important tools of effective pedagogy. This understanding encouraged me to be more aware of the way I manage my classroom.

> **Classroom discipline is not about controlling the students. It involves teaching them about their actions and giving them the responsibility to control their own behaviour.**

When I started using some management strategies, I noticed positive changes. Over time, I observed that classroom management helped to make it more inclusive for the students to get involved in the learning process. Also, the more I started using these strategies, the more they felt free to approach me. This also boosted their learning as they would come up to me to ask their doubts and show their work.

A classroom, according to me, should be safe for students and should encourage them to participate and make mistakes; it should help them to make choices regarding their own actions. Even though the 'choices' part is still being explored, these management approaches have clearly helped me create a fear-free environment for students to make mistakes and learn, instead of being punished for the slightest mistakes.



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Demonstration Model: Learning and Improving Through Experience

Sariya Ali

The Demonstration Model is a tried-and-tested, effective approach for capacity building of teachers. It serves as a learning opportunity for both teachers and learners. This article documents a teacher's experience of working with the Demonstration Model and the subsequent deepening of her understanding.

In adult capacity-building spaces, often 'someone' is working to develop others' capacity, but the participants are seen simply sitting and listening. However, capacity building for teachers works differently. A teacher learns before teaching, observes the results and continues to learn new things while teaching. This process is reflected quite effectively in the Demonstration Model of teacher capacity building.

What is a demonstration workshop, and what are its steps?

The word demonstration means 'to show how a task or process is done by actually doing it'. In simple terms, the Demonstration Model is a form of workshop in which one teacher demonstrates teaching processes by implementing them in a real classroom, while participating teachers sit at the back and observe.

The framework of a demonstration can be understood through the following points:

- A teacher actively works with students in the teaching-learning process, and the impact is evident in students' learning levels. The demonstration is organised in a teacher's classroom.
- The participating teachers are usually from the same panchayat/cluster or a nearby one.
- On the day of the demonstration, the demonstrating teacher teaches the students in the classroom, while the participating teachers sit at the back and observe.

"The Demonstration Model is a form of workshop in which one teacher demonstrates teaching processes by implementing them in a real classroom, while participating teachers observe."



Figure 1: A demonstration class in progress.



Figure 2: The Demo Model may include participation in school processes like the morning assembly.

- After the class ends, the participating teachers and the demonstrating teacher discuss their learnings, challenges, and plans.

Usually, the process is carried out in a real classroom with students. However, it can also take another form, where only the participating teachers are involved, and the demonstration presents examples of different teaching processes. This article focuses on the first type.

A good demonstration

Here is a detailed example of the demonstration framework. This workshop was conducted in a primary school in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan. There were around 35 students and 2 teachers in the school. The demo was conducted for Hindi, and nine Hindi teachers from the nearby schools were invited to participate.

The Hindi teacher who was demonstrating had already begun working on daily lesson plans. The continuity of this work was reflected in students' improving language levels. A set of interesting language and mathematics activities was also conducted during the morning assembly.

Before the demonstration

1. The teacher decided to work on Vijaydan Detha's story *Kuraj Ri Vinti* (Kuraj's Request)[i] included in the Rajasthan State Board's Class IV Hindi textbook. For this, they first prepared a five-day lesson plan. The demo was on the first day of the plan. Although the lesson was for Class IV, the demonstration class also included students from Class III.
2. It was decided that the participants would also observe the morning assembly. So, the demonstration was planned to begin at 7:30 am with the assembly, to be followed by the workshop (classroom observation and discussion), and end by 11 am.

The demonstration

1. The workshop began with the assembly. Participants were asked to sit at the back and observe.
2. After the prayer, students performed a role-play on a story. Students from classes I and II recited a poem, and those from class V asked some word problems. What was interesting was that all the students answered with complete confidence. There was no hesitation among the students during the presentation. This showed that the students were familiar with this process and that it was held regularly.
3. After this, the format of the workshop and expectations were discussed with the participating teachers. For example, they were told not to speak

while observing the class, not to interact with the students, to keep recording their observations, and noting their questions.

4. Everyone was given a handout describing language-teaching processes and asked to mark the practices they observe during the class.
5. After the assembly, the demo class began. The participants sat at the back, while the teacher seated the students in a circle. To make the students comfortable, the teacher had already told them that some people would be joining them.
6. The teacher worked according to the plan in the following ways:
    i. First, to create a comfortable environment, the teacher listened to a poem or story from the students and asked how they were feeling or whether they wanted to share any experiences from the previous day. The teacher then introduced the name of the lesson.
    ii. To build context, the teacher asked a few questions related to the story. For example, how fields are managed and what people do when a bird enters a field and eats the crops, etc.
    iii. Next, the teacher discussed the pictures of the story. The students were given sufficient time to observe them, and they were asked various questions about each picture. For example: What has the *Kuraj* come to the field for? What might the farmer be saying to the *Kuraj*?
    iv. The teacher then narrated the story orally, using gestures and expressions, which was quite engaging. To maintain the students' attention, the teacher kept asking questions. For example: Whom did the *Kuraj* request first? What kind of temptation did the farmer show?
    v. After narrating the story, the teacher asked the students to retell it. All of them were encouraged to add to it. Some students came to the front to narrate parts.
    vi. The teacher had prepared a chart with the story written in simple language. After this activity,



Figure 3: Students engaged in a classroom activity.

the teacher first pointed to the words and read the story aloud and then asked the students to read. The teacher specifically gave opportunities to students who were still in the early stages of reading. Some students struggled while others tried to guess the words; the teacher helped them read the opening lines.

vii. Finally, the teacher had them do an activity in subgroups. Students who were at the expected class level were asked to write the story in their own words. Students who were behind the expected class level were asked to identify difficult words from the story and write them in their notebooks. This group also copied the difficult words from the chart the teacher had put up.

The demonstration ended here. The participating teachers asked the students a few questions. Students' notebooks were given to them for observation.

After the demonstration

After the demonstration, the following points were discussed with the participating teachers:

Question: Which teaching process in the classroom did you find most effective?

Answers: The answers varied. For example, participants found the story's expressive oral narration engaging and observed that the students listened attentively. They found the discussion around the pictures effective because it helped students understand the story properly. They also found the students to be effectively confident during reading. They continued with the activity even when they felt stuck. The plan for subgroup work was also well received.

Question: Which teaching processes did you observe? Look at the handout and identify them.

Answers: All the teachers' responses were collated, and it was found that most of the steps had been implemented.

Question: Which of the steps in this process do you try to do in your own classroom, and which ones are difficult to implement?

Answers: The participants said that read-aloud was not very effective in their classrooms, which made them uncomfortable. They work on picture reading, but do not write stories in their own words.

Question: After this workshop, what are the two-three things that you will implement in your classroom?

> **The purpose of the Demonstration Model is to show what the teacher is doing and how it is leading to improvement in the students' learning levels.**

Answers: The participants said that they would practise read-aloud, ensure that picture reading was included in their lesson plans, and give students opportunities to narrate the stories read aloud by them.

It was also discussed that some of these processes needed to be continued regularly. For example, discussing stories, using pictures, and listening to students during the morning assembly. Finally, the teacher shared her plan for the future.

This was a good demo workshop. The teacher had prepared a chart of the story so that the students could understand it in simple language. It appeared that the teacher had been consistently using the processes she had demonstrated. Students' spontaneous responses showed that they had acquired foundational skills. This example illustrates well what a good demo workshop involves.

Why consider this model effective?

For the demo, the teacher had already tried working with two to three lessons. She was completely comfortable and had developed confidence in the process. Throughout this entire process, she grew as a better teacher and began facilitating sessions in several workshops. This helps us understand a few points:

1. A major part of 'adult learning' is that the person who teaches must continue learning. The teacher's preparation for the demo is evidence of this. When a teacher organises her teaching approach and sees its impact on students' learning levels, a long-term shift can be seen in her teaching practices. Only after seeing the results is the approach shared with others.
2. Three things became clear regarding changes in the participants' perspectives:
   i. First, when teachers observe students' learning levels and see that students are learning through a particular teaching approach, they develop confidence in that approach.
   ii. Second, participants begin to feel that if they also do something similar, they too can teach/support their colleagues.

iii. Third, seeing someone succeed under similar circumstances creates the belief that something can be done in one's own school as well.

The demonstration model is effective for building the capacities of both – the learner and the teacher. In our experience, after conducting demonstrations, many participating teachers showed increased confidence and were also made facilitators at other forums. Some teachers have even written research papers and participated in state-level seminars. All of this further demonstrates the model's effectiveness.

Learning from experience

The workshop presented above is a good example, but our initial experiences also taught us some important lessons that can help ensure the quality of workshops:

1. In some of the initial workshops, it was observed that teachers conducted demos on content they had already taught. This meant that students were given the same activity, questions, and tasks. To some extent, it began to look like a dramatised performance. (However, even if students know the teaching methods, changing the lesson content can still change how they respond. We already saw this in the demonstration example.)

   Such a workshop also cannot demonstrate how teachers respond to challenges that arise in the classroom, how they improve their plans, or how they make various attempts to teach their students.

2. In some instances, it was also observed that the demonstrating teacher became anxious while trying to do everything perfectly. The teacher's ease and comfort are very important. This means the teacher should not be overly concerned about ensuring that students do not say anything wrong.

The important thing to understand is that the purpose of a demonstration is not to show how much the students know. Its purpose is to show what the teacher is doing and how it is leading to improvement in the students' learning levels.

We have come this far, yet miles to go…

In this article, through a demo, we have understood what happens in a workshop, why it is effective, and what should not be done during a demo. We observed that this process builds teachers' confidence in teaching processes.

Keeping all the above points in mind, it is important to remember three things:

1. The demo should be conducted with a class which the teacher has been working consistently and has seen an impact on students.
2. Participants should clearly know how to observe and what they need to record.
3. After the demonstration, every participant should gain a clear perspective on how to move forward in a planned manner. The facilitator needs to pay particular attention to this.

References

i *Kuraj* are birds of the crane species that migrate to Rajasthan during the monsoons. Locally called *Kurja* or *Kurjan*, the bird is prominent in Rajasthan's culture, especially in music and literature.

Translated from Hindi Translator: Sandeep Dubey Vetter: Bhumika Popli



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Language Teaching Through Poems in LKG and UKG

Kavita Kapil

Using poems and stories to engage with children who attend *Anganwadis* is both interesting and meaningful. When these poems and stories are selected with specific learning outcomes in mind—and aligned with the children's context and interests—the chances of achieving these outcomes improve significantly. This article records the experiences of language-related activities carried out using selected poems and stories.

For the past five years, I have been working with *Anganwadi* children, listening to and reciting poems and singing with them, something they particularly enjoy. This led me to think about what other activities related to poems could engage children in teaching and learning.

National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) 2022 helped me understand this. This document outlines the learning outcomes (LOs) in Hindi and English languages for children aged 4 to 5 years.

(pp. 257, 258, 261)

- Listens to and enjoys humming a variety of songs in different languages regularly heard at home and in the neighbourhood.
- Initiates conversations in daily life with peers and teachers in a variety of school settings.
- Follows words from left to right and from top to bottom on a printed page.
- Enjoys rhyming words in songs and poems.
- Listens to longer (4-8 sentences) songs/poems (familiar) with attention and has conversations about them.



Figure 1: A student matches the lines on the poem chart with lines written on paper strips.

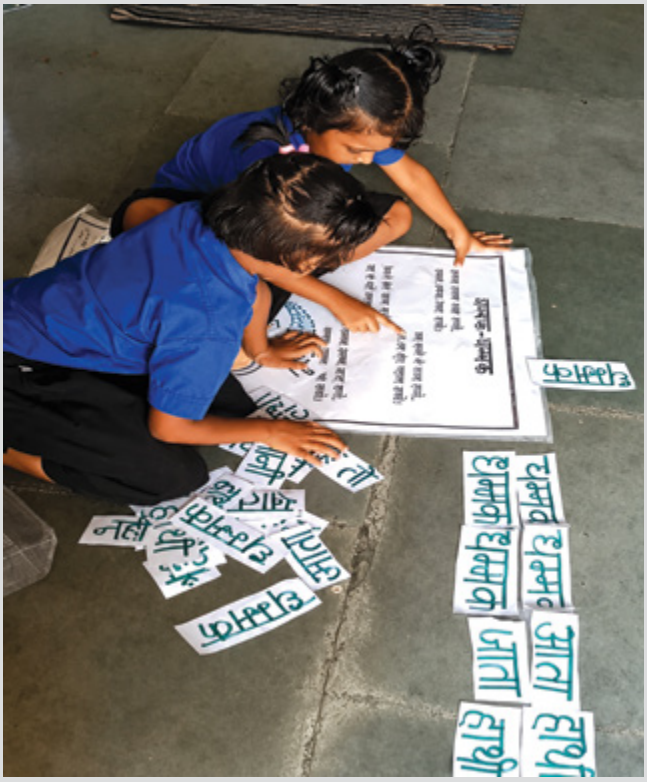

Figure 2: Students identify words on the poem chart with words written on paper strips.

Selecting poems

Keeping these outcomes in mind, I began planning activities around poems. The first step was to select poems with which children can connect emotionally, and what better than those about animals. So, for 4-year-old children, I selected simple, imaginative and fun four-line poems about animals which they have seen or heard about, like an elephant or a mouse.

During the class

On the first day, one of the poems was sung with the children using gestures. The poem was about a hen going to the market and her children asking to go along.

(Murgi Maa ghar se nikli, Jhola le bazaar chali. Bachche bole chen chen chen Amma hum bhi saath chalein.)

This poem presented the opportunity for the children to talk about their family. I asked, 'Where all do you go with your mother?' The children replied that they go to their grandmother's house, to the shop, and to stroll around in the evening. While answering other such questions, they also told me what their mothers buy at the market, what they do to go out with their mothers, etc.

After this, the poem *Kitna Paani* (How much water?) was sung, and a conversation began around it. When asked, 'Apart from fish, which other animals live in water?' the children named other aquatic animals. They could also tell what would happen if fish came out of the water. Such poems help children express themselves in conversations about what they know and experience.

Finger reading

I wrote these poems in large, clear letters on chart paper. The children were now introduced to the 'poem chart'. I told them the poem they had been singing was written this way. At that time, there were joyful expressions on their faces. They were happy because something new was happening. By this time, we had already worked in class on the sound and shape of the letter 'म'. Some children started looking for 'म' in the *poem Murgi Maa*. A conversation started in the class.

First child: Ma'am, it says 'म' here!

Second child: Ma'am, there are so many 'म'!

Teacher: What are some things that start with 'म'?

Children: *Murgi*, *machhli*, *mummy*, etc.

"I wrote the poems in large, clear letters on chart paper. The children were now introduced to the 'poem chart'. I told them the poem they had been singing was written in this way. Instantly, I could see joy on their faces. They were happy because they were learning something new."

After this initial conversation, I talked to them about reading. For example, when reading, we move from left to right and from top bottom. After this, I read the poem with the help of a small stick so that all the children could follow the written words on the chart as I read them. Some children then made their first attempt at reading the poem from the chart.

I noticed that in the beginning, children would place their finger on the first word in the poem chart, but as they recited the poem, they would not move their finger forward. For example, a child placed their finger on *Murgi* and said the whole line, '*Murgi Maa ghar se nikli*.' During this, their finger remained on *Murgi*. So, I started working with them on the lines of a poem.



Figure 3: A student reading from a poem chart in class.

Next time, when I made new charts, I wrote the alternate lines of the poems in two different colours so that they could understand the difference between the two lines. After this, the children started moving their fingers from top to bottom.

Reading Corner

After completing the activities related to the poem, we talked to the children about putting the poem chart in the Reading Corner. They were also told that whenever they get some free time, they can go here and read the poems. Now, whenever they get an opportunity or finish their work early, they go to the Reading Corner and read the poems. In the beginning, I read the poem charts placed in the Reading Corner along with them. Later, this activity became a part of the children's reading habit.

After these activities with poems, it was observed that all the LKG children began reciting poems without hesitation, with actions and expressions. While reading the poem from the chart, their fingers were on the same line that they were narrating. Some of the outcomes mentioned in the NCF-FS for LKG can be achieved through these activities.

UKG children and poems

Among the Learning Outcomes mentioned in the NCF-FS 2022 for children between 5 and 6 years of age in both languages are:

- Sings/recites short (4-5 sentences) songs/poems.
- Identifies rhyming words from familiar poems and creates new rhyming words.
- Reads simple two-syllable words that are familiar and with known letters of the alphabet.

To achieve these outcomes, some new activities are carried out at the UKG level. In addition, all the activities listed for LKG were also repeated in the UKG classroom.

(pp. 257, 258, 262)

Preparation before class

By LKG, children develop some understanding of sentences. At the UKG level, we work with them on understanding words. For this too, poems with six to eight lines are selected. For example, this poem about tomatoes: *Laal tamatar, laal tamatar, Mai toh tumko khaunga, Abhi na khao, mai kuch din mein, Aur adhik pak jaunga,* etc.

I pasted poetry strips in their notebook so that the children could continue reading the lines at home after school, and their parents could help them too.

Creating poem charts

In this activity, once children become familiar with the poem, the lines of the poem were written on separate strips and given to the children. The complete poem was also written on a separate poem chart. I told them to match the first letter of the lines on the strips to the first letter of the lines on the poem chart. For example, when the children looked for the first line in the *Murgi Maa* poem, they tried to find which line starts with the letter 'म'. They then used the first letter of each line to place the lines on the empty chart and complete the poem chart.

With the poems that followed, the children also came across lines in which the first letter was the same. For example: *Anda jhool raha tha Jhoola/Apne pankhon par jhoolenge.* Both these lines start with the letter 'झ'.

While helping the children, I drew their attention to the whole word. When they looked at the whole word, other letters caught their attention. They found that the last letters were different in the two words. From here, while working on the poem, the children completed it by looking at the whole word and using the lines of the poem. This way, we started working with the children on words and the sounds of their last letters.

Illustrating poems

I pasted poetry strips in their notebook so that the children could continue reading the lines at home after school, and their parents could help them too. A few days later, one child asked, 'Ma'am, can we draw a picture below this?' After this, we did an activity with all the children where they drew pictures based on the poem. They made very detailed illustrations of the poem and discussed them.

Figure 4 shows the drawing made for the poem *Chidiyon Ka School* (A School for Birds). In this, the child has shown the shops that they see on their way to school, along with birds eating food. In this way,



Figure 4: A child's imagination of a school for birds.

this activity gives them an opportunity to express themselves freely.

Understanding of words

To help children understand words, two activities are used. In the first activity, I would call out some words from the poem, and the children had to find those words in the poem and write them down in their notebooks. In the second activity, the children were given word cards from the poem. They had to arrange the cards to reconstruct the complete poem.

Bringing it together

Poetry engages young learners and fosters their interest in language learning. It facilitates thinking, imagining, inferring, and drawing conclusions about a given topic, while also making it enjoyable. At the foundational level, poems give children opportunities to use language, enrich their command of it, and derive pleasure from it.

Translated from Hindi Translator: Pragya P Vetter: Bhumika Popli



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Exit Ticket as a Tool in the Science Classroom

Ashlesha Sharma

What is the technique of an 'exit ticket'? How does it help a teacher assess the learning of each student at the end of each class, especially when dealing with science concepts? A teacher employs the exit ticket strategy effectively in class and writes about the experience.

Learning, for both students and teachers, is a continuous process; it is more so for the teacher, as they must keep track of students' learning and modify their teaching strategies accordingly, particularly in science classrooms where concepts are built progressively. Being a new teacher, I found it a daunting task to handle both. However, after teaching for a couple of months, during one of the Teacher Professional Development (TPD) sessions at our school, I came across the technique of using 'exit tickets' in classroom learning.

An exit ticket is a simple but reliable way to gauge a student's understanding of a particular lesson. It consists of two to three questions that are asked at the end of the lesson and are answered by everyone on a small slip of paper. These are then collected and reviewed by the teacher. They are a quick way to review the understanding of the lesson and are quite predictable in nature; hence, faster to check. In the science classroom, where there is more scope for misconceptions, exit tickets offer a window into students' progress and understanding, making it easier to rectify those misconceptions sooner rather than later.

Implementation

Initially, it was difficult to implement the exit tickets strategy in the classroom. The questions needed to be precise but short enough that the students could answer them in a short span of 3–5 minutes. Additionally, as the students in my class were unfamiliar with the activity, it took them some time to adapt to it. But later, as the routine was established, they began expecting and even asking for it by the end of the lessons. During the first few times, I used a set of two questions for the exit tickets in my Class VII science lessons: one, asking students what they learned during the class, such as key concepts from photosynthesis; and two, related to specific content covered, such as the role of chlorophyll. Later, more

> **Exit tickets are a quick way to review the understanding of the lesson and are quite predictable in nature.**

open-ended and analytical questions were introduced to deepen their scientific thinking.

Examples of a few exit ticket questions for Class VII

- Lesson: On excretion in living organisms
  Question: What would happen if excretory products started accumulating in our body?
- Lesson: On skeleton, joints, and muscles
  Question: Imagine if humans had a single long backbone instead of separate vertebrae. How would it affect our movement?



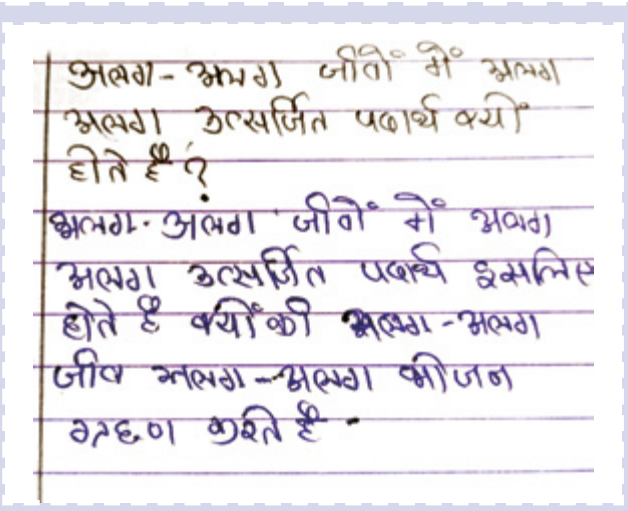
Figure 1: Students submit their exit tickets at the end of the lesson.

- Lesson on movement and locomotion
  Question: Can you explain why a germinating seed grows towards light?

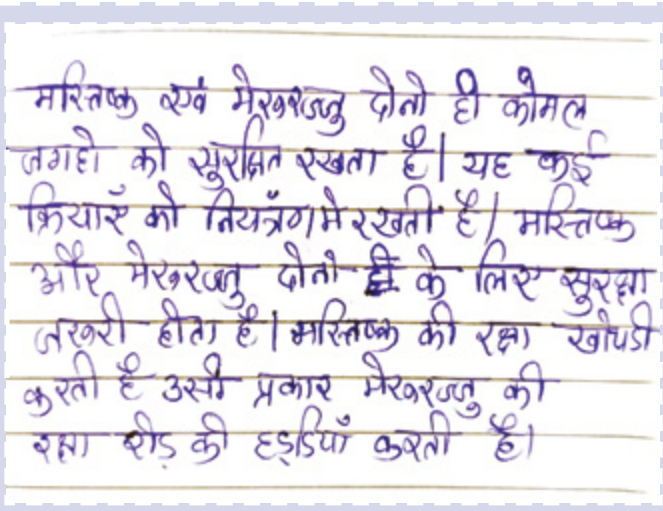
In practice

It is interesting to see how students have a similar yet unique take on a common topic. This is valuable in a science classroom as the students often interpret phenomena differently. For example, when I asked, 'What would happen if excretory products started accumulating in our body?' One student described what would happen if there was an excess of it: 'If excretory products get accumulated in our body, we will have to face many diseases'. Other students focused on its function: If excretory products get accumulated in our body, then our body will excrete them out.' Both responses were technically accurate, highlighting diverse perspectives – health consequences versus organ functionality. However, this diversity underscores the need for precisely worded questions with a single correct answer to streamline assessment and ensure clarity when addressing misconceptions.

Answering questions daily helps students better frame their thoughts and think in a more scientific manner.


अलग-अलग जीवों में अलग अलग उत्सर्जित पदार्थ क्यों होते हैं?
अलग-अलग जीवों में अलग अलग उत्सर्जित पदार्थ इसलिए होते हैं क्योंकी अलग-अलग जीव अलग-अलग भोजन ग्रहण करते हैं।

A new way of thinking is seen here where the student correlated the type of food consumed with the type of excretory product. The teacher can address this topic during the next lesson.


मस्तिष्क एवं मेरुरज्जु दोनो ही कोमल जगहो को सुरक्षित रखता है। यह कई क्रियाएँ को नियंत्रण में रखती है। मस्तिष्क और मेरुरज्जु दोनो ही के लिए सुरक्षा जरूरी होता है। मस्तिष्क की रक्षा खोपड़ी करती है उसी प्रकार मेरुरज्जु की रक्षा रीढ़ की हड्डियाँ करती है।

A misconception is seen here along with incorrect framing of the sentence. Two concepts are mixed. This can be cleared up in the next lesson.

Reflections

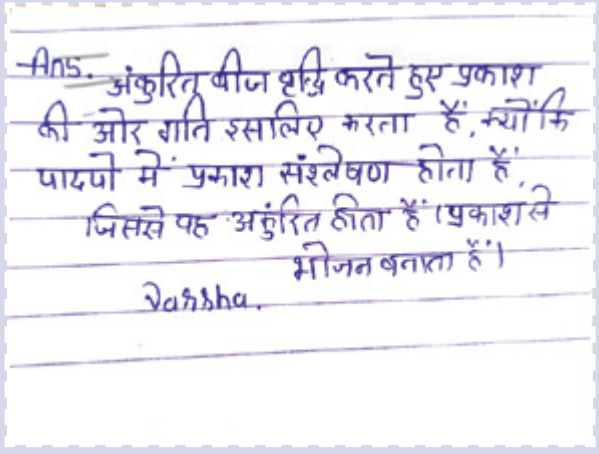
Providing constant feedback to students regarding their answers is an important part of this practice. This ensures that students' doubts and misconceptions are resolved in the classroom, making sure that the student has a correct understanding of the concept moving forward.

It is important to incorporate it into one's daily lesson plans with a dedicated 3–5-minute slot so that they become a seamless part of the routine. In the above snippet of my lesson plan, I have added the exit ticket separately.

Table 1. Inserting an exit ticket into the lesson plan itself.

4	Bones of the Leg and Knee Joints	Discuss the thigh bone as the longest and strongest bone. Kneecap protects the knee joint. Discussion on ball socket joint and hinge joint.	Identify and move different parts of the leg to understand bone structure. Location of joint and its movement. **Exit note**- What would happen if our joints were not flexible?	Diagrams of leg bones and knee. Model of human skeleton Textbook

As every student must write, exit tickets help those students who are either hesitant or reluctant to participate in classroom activities. When their misconception is addressed in class in this way, they do not feel bad about writing a wrong answer, and when they write a correct and thorough response, we can appreciate that response in class.


Ans. अंकुरित बीज वृद्धि करते हुए प्रकाश की ओर गति इसलिए करता हैं, क्योंकि पादपो में प्रकाश संश्लेषण होता हैं, जिससे वह अंकुरित होता हैं (प्रकाश से भोजन बनाता हैं)
Varsha.

For example, a very shy student wrote a very good response to the question, "Why germinating show movement towards light?" She would rarely participate in group discussions, but when her response was appreciated, she grew more confident in sharing her views with the class.

Challenges

- Time management
  Allocating 3–5 minutes at the end of a 45-minute science lesson can be tricky, especially when activities run overtime. Initially, I struggled to balance this, but I now plan lessons with a buffer for exit tickets.
- Question design
  Planning precise yet assessable questions took some time on my part. For example, a question like 'How do hormones affect growth and development' would lead to a variety of correct but imprecise answers. Reframing it to 'How does the hormone auxin affect the growth and development of a plant stem, particularly in terms of phototropism?' leads to a specific, easy-to-assess answer.
- Student adaptation
  Many students, especially while beginning this practice, found it difficult to articulate their scientific ideas within the given time frame. This was resolved by asking simpler questions in the first few lessons and then gradually increasing the complexity.

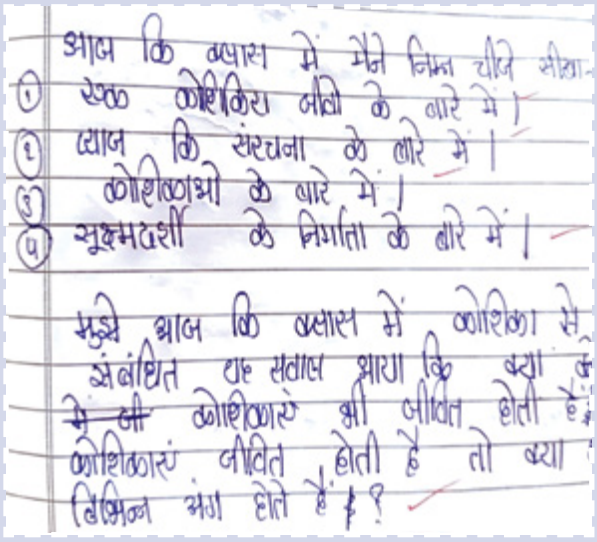
> **In the science classroom, where there is more scope for misconceptions, exit tickets offer a window into students' progress and understanding.**

Benefits

- Prevents disengagement
  When students start losing focus towards the end of the class, this activity helps maintain engagement and reinforces learning.
- Keeps teacher aligned with students' thinking
  It helps to keep the teacher aware of students' thought processes and the misconceptions that they might have, which can be eradicated in the next lesson.
- Enhances curriculum alignment
  It is a great way to assess whether learning objectives have been fulfilled or not. If students struggle with a particular concept, for example, the transfer of heat, a hands-on activity can be planned to supplement that concept.
- Immediate feedback
  Quick feedback can be provided to students, reinforcing correct understanding and correcting errors.

Considerations

- Varied question types
  One can consider introducing a variety of question types such as MCQs, true or false, short answer, etc.


आज कि क्लास में मैंने निम्न चीजें सीखा-
(1) एक कोशिकिय जीवो के बारे में।
(2) ब्याज कि संरचना के बारे में।
(3) कोशिकाओ के बारे में।
(4) सूक्ष्मदर्शी के निर्माता के बारे में।
मुझे आज कि क्लास में कोशिका से संबंधित यह सवाल आया कि क्या कोशिकाएं भी जीवित होती हैं, कोशिकाएं जीवित होती है तो क्या विभिन्न अंग होते हैं ?

When asked what they learnt during the class, a student from class VIII asked what he learnt, along with a question. This query is addressed in the next class, which made the student feel that he was a relevant part of the classroom teaching-learning process.

> **Answering questions daily helps students better frame their thoughts and think in a more scientific manner.**

The students can be asked to write their own takeaways about certain concepts, which can help the teacher assess their thinking more rigorously.

- Peer learning tool
  The strategy can also be an effective peer learning tool. Students can share, assess and compare their responses in small groups. It fosters a collaborative effort to gain understanding and makes learning much more lasting.
- Differentiated responses
  Allowing flexibility in how students respond based on their capabilities helps cater to diverse learning styles. A student with proficient writing skills can write an elaborate answer, and one with limited skills can write a simpler one. Answers given by both are valid.

Conclusion

I have observed how dynamic the learning environment of my science classroom became as I started employing exit tickets and using the responses that I got to plan subsequent lessons. They have proven to be a great tool to bridge the gap between instruction and comprehension, thus ensuring the understanding of a wide range of scientific concepts. By dispelling misconceptions, increasing student involvement and nurturing scientific reasoning, exit tickets have made learning a seamless and enriching journey for both students and teachers.



Ashlesha Sharma teaches science to middle and secondary school students at Azim Premji School, Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh. She finds teaching science quite exciting and satisfying and enjoys exploring and explaining concepts through the curiosity and questions of her students.

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Comparison: The Foundation of Mathematical Understanding

Mukesh Malviya

Can comparison be an effective skill for understanding mathematics? Reflecting on this question, the author explores the meaning of comparison within selected mathematical concepts. Drawing on his classroom experiences, he demonstrates that an understanding of the concept of comparison plays an important role in comprehending and explaining several mathematical concepts.

One day, I was trying to understand these questions for myself: How have the meanings of the words we speak or understand come to us? What is the process of generating meaning from something spoken or heard? For example, if I say, 'I saw a dog on the way,' what does the word 'way' or 'dog' mean in this sentence? In other words, when these words are spoken or heard, what kind of image or meaning is formed in the cognition of the speaker or listener? And why is only this meaning formed?

A little reflection reveals that perhaps we have superimposed meanings upon words. Our understanding of the word 'dog' has been formed through various observations and pieces of information gathered. These include its sound, shape, various images, and the different associations formed through experiences of hearing or using the word at different times. All these images, bits of information, and experiences together create the concept of the word 'dog'. Whenever I hear or speak this word, I apprehend a particular meaning which is more or less the same, or at least similar, for other people who speak, hear, or write the word. We also use many words for which we do not have any concrete image, but contexts and numerous experiences associated with them give us a sense of their meaning or conceptual essence.

Hence, a broad conclusion can be drawn that the meaning of a word is not derived from just one or two pieces of information about it; rather, it is formed through the various experiences associated with that word, the occasions on which meanings are attributed to it, and the experiences that follow.

Now, let us consider those words or concepts that students encounter while studying different subjects at school. In mathematics, for example, there are terms such as *ones, tens, perimeter, place value, area*, etc. Students rarely, perhaps never, hear such words outside school. In constructing the meanings of these words, therefore, they have to depend largely on their interactions with the teacher and the textbook. Here, the broad conclusion we arrived at— 'the meaning of a word develops through varied experiences with it'— opens up an important area for teachers to reflect upon. The application and experience of subject-specific terms are relatively rare in students' school lives. As their experiences with these terms increase, so does their conceptual clarity.

> **I arrived at the conclusion that the process of understanding numbers could become much more meaningful if we approached it by adopting the lens of comparison.**

Having an understanding, but lacking the language to explain

In everyday life, or outside school, we are not usually asked to explain the words or concepts we use. No one asks us what a 'dog' is or what its definition is. It is enough to use the word or to understand it. However, the language of explanation requires some additional skills. For instance, here we are discussing an essential skill needed to understand and explain mathematics.

To explore students' understanding of some mathematical terms, I began a conversation with students of Class VI about elementary concepts, such as *more or less, near and far,* and so on. I asked them, 'Tell me the name of one



Figure 1: Building the skill of comparison helps in understanding mathematical terms like 'distance'.

object that is near and one that is far away.' The students began naming objects that were near or far from them using complete sentences. For example, 'My house is near; Mahesh's house is far'; 'Reena is sitting near me; Anshita is sitting far from me'; and so on. Meanwhile, I kept asking them, 'What does *near* mean, and what does *far* mean?' One student said, 'The girls' hostel is near the school, and the boys' hostel is far from the school.'

I asked again, 'What is distance?' One student said', 'Distance is kilometres.' Some said, 'It is metres.' Another student described distance as length. Just as we were about to arrive at some conclusion, Smita said, 'We can reach the girls' hostel quickly, while it takes longer to reach the boys' hostel.' I asked, 'Why?' She replied, 'If the distance is greater, it takes more time, and if the distance is less, it takes less time.'

Are we comparing distances? We did not explicitly define *near* and *far* here; however, we realised that the unspoken understanding in grasping these concepts is that of comparison. We were trying to explain *near* and *far* based on comparing the distance or the time taken to reach a place. For me, children's understanding here is significant. In mathematical contexts, the ability (skill) of comparison is required to explain certain terms and concepts.

I asked these students another question: 'How many students are sitting in this room?' The students counted and answered, 'There are 38 students. There are 20 girls and 18 boys.' Then I said, 'That means there are *more* girls and *fewer* boys! Now tell me, what does *more* mean here, and what does *fewer* mean?' The answer was, '20 is more and 18 is less.' I asked, 'What is more in 20? Or tell me, what does 20 mean?' We kept grappling with questions like these for some time. We perhaps knew the different meanings of *more* and *less*, but we had never tried to analyse and explain a word in this way. I asked myself, 'What does a given number mean?' Take 45, for example. Even if we do not compare it with another number, 45 will acquire meaning only when we see the 1 contained in it 45 times. Or we can understand it in terms of another grouping (such as tens and units).

I arrived at the conclusion that the process of understanding numbers could become much more meaningful if we approached it by adopting the lens of comparison. Thereafter, my conversations with the students took the direction of drawing their attention to the quantity contained in a number, in order to help them understand and express it. Similarly, we also engaged in classroom discussions around problems

or examples involving operations, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, wherein comparison was used as a basis for giving broader meaning to the number and to the result of an operation.

Understanding fractions through comparison

The fundamental question related to fractions is: What do we call a piece or part of a unit? We understand all numbers greater than one by comparing them to the concept of one. Can we similarly develop an understanding of a piece or part of one by using comparison with one as the basis? I posed this problem before the students. Showing them a piece of chalk, I said that this was one piece of chalk. Then I took another piece and said that these were two pieces of chalk. I then broke one piece of chalk and held up the piece and asked how many pieces of chalk this was. This was a piece of broken chalk. I asked, 'If we want to express this as a number, what would we say? We cannot call it 1, because we have already called the whole piece of chalk 1.' One of the students said, 'It is less than half.' I then took another piece of chalk, broke it into two equal parts, and asked, 'How much [of one] is this piece?' They said, 'Half.' 'Now tell me, what is half?' We understood that two equal pieces of chalk together make one whole piece of chalk. Therefore, one of these pieces is half.

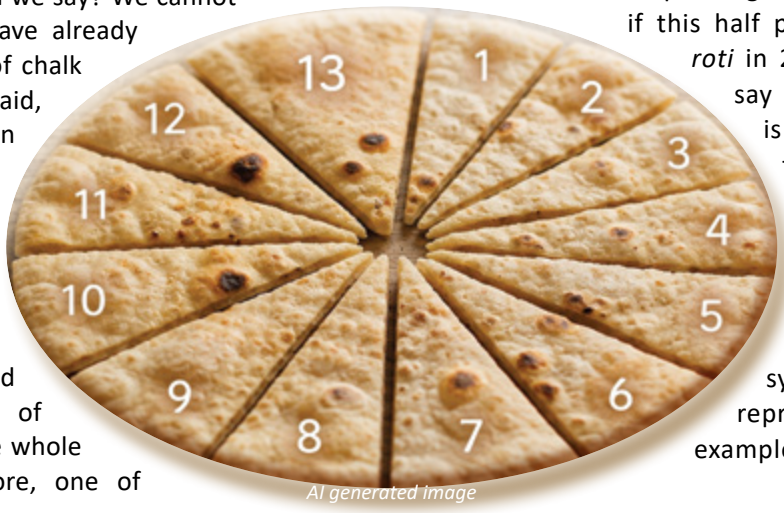


Figure 2: Understanding fractions as parts of a whole.

Now we returned to the small piece that was smaller than half. How much [of one] is this piece? How can we find out? Should we place this piece against the whole piece of chalk and see how many such pieces would make up the whole? (If we have always understood fraction as a part of a unit divided into some number of equal parts, then the problem in real life is that apart from measuring instruments, we rarely encounter a part of a unit that has actually been divided into equal parts.) The problem arises in this way: while eating a *roti*, how much is the piece we break off for a single morsel? If we have to say how much of the *roti* this piece is, what would we do?

If we pause and think about it, then perhaps we would come up with this strategy: place this piece over the whole *roti* and see how many times it fits onto the *roti*.

> **The process of understanding numbers could become much more meaningful if we approached it by adopting the lens of comparison.**

Suppose this piece fits onto the whole *roti* thirteen times. Then we have an answer: it is one-thirteenth of a *roti*. However, what happens if the piece does not fit exactly? If, after placing it twelve times, some part of the *roti* is still left, and on placing it the thirteenth time, a portion of the piece extends beyond the *roti*, then we have a new

problem—one that cannot be resolved simply by comparing the piece with the *roti*. We will have to think again about what to do. Through thoughtful reasoning, perhaps we may arrive at the idea of dividing the piece into two equal parts and placing one of those parts against the whole *roti*. Now, if this half piece covers the entire *roti* in 25 placements, we can say that half of this piece is equal to one-twenty-fifth of the whole *roti*. The fundamental basis of this process is comparison. We can impose this understanding upon symbols or written representations. For example, we might represent it as 1/13, or 2/25, or in some other form.

Those knowledgeable about mathematics may question how a piece of *roti* that is irregular in shape can be placed against the *roti*. Or that it may not be possible to divide the piece of *roti* into two exactly equal parts. Or they may argue that mathematics is a subject of precision and exact answers, and so on. I gave each student in my class a sheet of paper and asked, 'How many sheets of paper do you have?' Everyone said, 'One.' 'If I give you another sheet of paper like this, how many will you have?' Everyone said, 'Two.' 'Good. Now all of you tear off a piece from your sheet of paper. You now have to tell me how much your piece is.' When we were engaged in this dialogue and process of understanding fractions, we were gradually developing a language for explaining fractions.



Figure 3: Understanding fractions as a whole divided into a number of parts.

In school, I was taught how to calculate the area of a square, rectangle, triangle, or quadrilateral, usually by applying formulae involving the multiplication of length and breadth (and, in some cases, angles and so on). Here, the meaning and explanation of 'area' had not been properly attributed to the word 'area' itself. Multiplying the sides (length and breadth) gives us the area of a square of only one unit. It was only after I became a teacher, while trying to understand and explain things to my students, that I came to understand that finding the area means comparing a given region—whether a triangle, quadrilateral, or any other shape—with a unit square.

Can we examine other mathematical concepts from the perspective of comparison as well? Think about it! I had never understood mathematics in this way before.

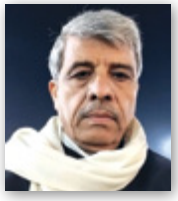
I believe that solving problems through formulae and mechanical procedures may produce answers, but it rarely develops an understanding of the underlying concepts or the language for explanation.

I believe that solving problems through formulae and mechanical procedures may produce answers, but it rarely helps develop an understanding of the underlying concepts or the language for explanation.

There is a language of explanation in everyday life too

Recently, I was travelling standing in a crowded train. Two friends were talking behind me. One of them had just returned from visiting a fort somewhere and was telling his friend about it. He said, 'The fort was very big.' The other asked, 'How big?' His friend replied, 'How do I explain it to you? Look, you know how big one compartment of this train is? Imagine putting three such compartments together—that's about how long the fort must have been. And its width was roughly equal to the length of five compartments. That is how big the fort was. Understand?' With this comparison, along with his friend, I too got a rough idea of how large the fort must have been. I began wondering: what if the friend had instead said, 'The fort covered approximately 95,000 or 96,000 square feet?' Would either his friend or I have been able to form any real sense of how large the fort was?

Translated from Hindi Translation: Hemant Gahlot Vetting: Simran Luthra



Mukesh Malviya teaches in a government school. He continuously analyses educational content and pedagogical methods to make his teaching practices more effective. He also writes about his classroom experiences and his understanding of different subjects. He was involved in writing the latest NCERT mathematics textbooks.

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When Manisha learned to write, I too passed a test



Afroz Jahan

I have been working at the primary school in Motia Kheda village, in Bairasia block of Bhopal, since 2021, teaching classes III to V. There is neither an *Anganwadi* nor any other learning centre within 3 kilometres of the village. Our school is the only one where most of the children from the village come to study. While teaching, I realised that the students of Class III were lagging behind students in other classes, both in reading and writing. It took me some time to understand that these students had fewer opportunities to read and write, which is why their foundational skills had remained weak.

Compared to the other students in the class, Manisha was lagging significantly behind. Her brother, Sandeep, was a student in Class IV. While Sandeep had difficulty in reading, Manisha had difficulty in both reading and writing. She used to write letters backwards. Like the other students in the class, I used to assign her homework after class. But the trouble was that she never brought back the completed work. When I spoke to her family, I learnt that she never opened her schoolbag at home. No amount of explaining to her made any difference. I spoke to her several times at my level, but her reply would always be, 'Madam ji, I want to do my homework, but I just can't do it. I intend to write correctly, but it ends up inverted!'

There also came a time when the other students in class started making fun of Manisha because of this. But no matter what anyone said to her, she would just smile. Seeing her sweet smile would calm my anger too. I would smile back. My fellow teachers would say, 'Madam, why do you smile? If you do this, she will never learn to write!' However, I believe that children cannot be corrected through punishment. Loving practices alone put children at ease, which helps them learn.

Meanwhile, I gave the other students simple storybooks and texts to work on; I gave Manisha more opportunities to write. I made her practise every day using *Bhasha Bharati*, the NCERT Class I book, and gave her simple storybooks to read. Manisha liked playing and listening to stories, so I prioritised these methods while teaching her. The other students in the class and I were surprised when she started reading these books fluently. She worked on this challenge of hers every day. Manisha's brother Sandeep also began to read fluently. They did silent reading, sometimes read as a pair and at times in a group. Through this process, their reading kept getting better.

Whenever I taught the students of classes I and II, I would include Manisha in the group activities. She would write letters on the board, and the other students would identify them. The younger students also enjoyed doing this with Manisha. Sometimes, I would have the students make letters and numbers in the air, sometimes write them with a finger on each other's hands, and sometimes repeat the same activity in mud and sand. Manisha and the younger students did these activities with interest.

One day Manisha said, 'Madam, I too can teach the children!' There was a different kind of sparkle in her eyes when she said this. Gradually, her handwriting began to improve. I gave her the *Ankur Abhyas Pustika* workbooks for classes I and II. She completed the writing tasks in them.

Meanwhile, seeing an improvement in the students' level, I started giving them Hindi and English words to write on the board. Since students are easily drawn to pictures, I would sometimes draw a picture on the board and have them caption it. When a student wrote it correctly, the other students would clap for them, and when they wrote it incorrectly, they would help them out. By the end of the year, Manisha had learned to write the words correctly and had also learned to

read and write to a considerable extent. As her letters began to come out right, her interest in writing also grew on its own.

Manisha was usually seen reading and writing along with Sandeep. She also started making friends with the other students in the class. One day, her parents came to meet me on their way to work. They were happy that their children were reading books to them and writing their names. Their support in sending the children to school regularly was also crucial. At the farewell party for Class V, Manisha made cards for the students in beautiful handwriting. The students were happy to receive the cards. They thanked Manisha. Manisha simply smiled, just as she used to.

There were undoubtedly many smaller milestones in reaching this point. It took a lot of time, but I am satisfied that my efforts did not go to waste. Students come to school with the hope of learning, and I am able to work towards that hope. What I learned and understood while teaching Manisha is also an achievement for me.

Afroz Jahan, Primary School Motia Kheda, Development Block Berasia, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Translated from Hindi Translation: Pragya P Vetter: Simran Luthra



Daily worksheet: A small routine, a big change

Santosh Kumar Nirmalkar

It is often observed in rural areas that students do not have an organised daily routine. Before coming to school and after returning home, they spend their time as they please. They pay little attention to things like studies, homework, personal hygiene, and time management. In the absence of parents' supervision, students spend most of their time playing or wandering around. As a result, they arrive at school without any preparation.

During the morning assembly, when we discussed students' daily routines with them, several concerning facts came to light. Some students came to school without brushing their teeth or bathing. Many students had not even opened their notebooks at home to look at the practice work assigned to them.

Largely, parents were unable to regularly monitor their children's studies and routines, as they were occupied with farming or other work. This situation became a matter of concern for our Head Teacher. He suggested that we prepare a worksheet on students' daily routines that students would complete with their parents' help, including parents' signatures and brief comments on a daily basis.

Since our school had a printer, it was easy to print worksheets for all the students. We prepared a worksheet keeping their daily activities in mind. It included important habits from waking up in the morning to going to bed at night. These habits included waking up on time, brushing teeth, going to the toilet, bathing, studying in the morning, arriving at school on time, washing hands and feet after playing, studying in the evening, and going to bed on time.

In addition, important points such as their behaviour toward family members and mobile phone use were specifically included. The worksheet covered two weeks of activities and was distributed to each student with their name on it. During the morning assembly, students were regularly reminded to complete the worksheet with their parents' help.

After one week, when the worksheets were reviewed, positive results began to appear. Students understood that the worksheet could only be completed by following the prescribed activities. As a result, they began waking up on time, brushing their teeth and bathing, and studying for at least one hour before coming to school. A clear improvement in their daily routines became visible.

The worksheet continued to be discussed during School Management Committee (SMC) meetings and Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTM) held from time to time. Many parents appreciated it, particularly the point concerning the use of mobile

phones. Students who used to spend most of their time on mobile phones began to limit their use. Some students stopped using mobile phones altogether.

Meanwhile, some parents shared that their children ask for money to come to school. They ask for this money for small, petty expenses, such as buying toffees, biscuits, and other snacks. Meeting this demand was also becoming difficult for the parents. This issue was incorporated into the next worksheet, and an open discussion was held with the students regarding it. A longer deliberation was conducted through the worksheet titled 'Think Before Asking for Money'. This helped students learn to differentiate between their actual needs and wants. They were also able to realise that their parents work hard to earn money, which goes towards running essential household expenses. As a result, the number of students asking their parents for money before coming to school declined.

In this way, a small initiative brought about a major change. Students also began making time for studies on their own. Positive changes were observed in habits such as personal hygiene, eating, studying, general conduct, and sleeping and waking up on time. Most importantly, through these worksheets, parents too became more aware and serious about their children's education and daily routine. This was not merely a change in the students' behaviour but also proved to be an effective effort in strengthening collaboration between the school and the community.

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Translated from Hindi Translator: Sandeep Dubey Vetter: Bhumika Popli



My Experiences of Teaching Kannada in an Urdu School

Sumalatha H Kamble

I am a Kannada teacher at the Government Urdu Model Senior Primary School in the Jamkhandi Taluka of Karnataka's Bagalkot district. I teach classes IV to VII. Most students in my classes do not know Kannada letters very well. They find it difficult to recognise letters and are also unfamiliar with the style of writing Kannada characters. They find both the clockwise (like ಒ, ಓ, ಚ, ತ, ದ, ಭ) and counterclockwise models (like ಅ, ಉ, ಊ, ಚ, ಟ, ಠ) of writing Kannada difficult. Which letter has to be written from top to bottom, and which has to be written from bottom to top, is very confusing for them. Besides writing, speaking Kannada is also difficult for them, impacting fluency when they talk.

All the students are from an Urdu-speaking background. Urdu is the language they use at home and with their family and relatives. Kannada for them is merely a subject to be studied in school. They are taught all the other subjects, such as science, maths, and Environmental Studies, in Urdu, which reduces the possibilities of learning Kannada in school even further. I believe this atmosphere in our school, where Kannada is rarely spoken, is the key reason they find it difficult to learn the language. As a teacher, I could not sit and watch this silently. So, I brainstormed possible solutions and tried them out.

To begin with, a bilingual approach was adopted where I started talking to the students about their daily lives and experiences and using Urdu as a medium to communicate in Kannada. My approach was to make the students recognise and become aware of Kannada vocabulary essential in their everyday life and help them with Kannada pronunciation as well. The next step was to make them practise writing individual letters of the Kannada script. To get their attention, I created attractive flashcards for each letter and also involved the students in the process of making them. Each student created one flashcard for a given letter.

I then guided them with the pronunciation of easy, everyday words made of simple letters, showed related illustrations, and tried to draw students' attention through flashcards of the same words. I focused on the pronunciation of every word. Moving ahead, I tried to introduce Kannada's *gunitakshara* (consonant-vowel combinations) and *sanyuktakshara*

(conjunct consonants) with the help of words and sentences used in everyday life. During this process, I guided the students to pay attention to every letter of the word. For example, *aane = aa + n + e*. A similar process was followed for every word. In this model, an attempt was made to teach vowels and consonants using flashcards. Since the activity involved repetition, it simultaneously reinforced learning.

The most useful technique for me was the use of 'palindromes'. They became a fun and engaging activity for the students, serving the purposes of enjoyment, learning, and encouragement. Whether written or read from right to left or from left to right, the words remain the same, with no change in their pronunciation or meaning. Usually, students write Urdu from right to left, while Kannada is written from left to right. By using this technique, all students were able to read these words comfortably, without the barriers of language or script differences. When they grasped the meaning of the words, they could pronounce them with ease, which bolstered their interest in learning. The use of images and illustrations before introducing these words also helped.

Another experiment that I did was aimed at encouraging students who were hesitant to speak in the classroom. Even though they spoke partly in Urdu and partly in Kannada, I I accepted it exactly as it was. I came up with various ideas for this experiment, such as having conversations around illustrations, role-plays, storytelling, conversations around shopping, the joy of festivities, discussions on homemade delicacies, and so on, so that students could express themselves freely.

When I arranged for them to sing *bhaavgeet* or lyrical poems and listen to their audio-video versions, the students participated with interest and curiosity.

Since the classroom environment was fear-free, students attended my classes regularly. They started asking me to conduct Kannada activities whenever any other teacher was on leave. As soon as a lesson ended, they would immediately write down the answers to the questions and show them to me. They began doing their homework with great diligence. The enthusiasm was such that they decided that the welcome songs at school events would be sung in Kannada. What could bring me greater happiness than this!

All these practices and activities eventually improved their Kannada writing. By writing on blackboards, flashcards, practice sheets, and notebooks, their Kannada letters had started to look beautiful. Overall, seeing students of an Urdu school learning Kannada with so much passion has given immense meaning and satisfaction to my professional journey, one that I acknowledge with utmost gratitude.

Sumalta H Kamble, Teacher, Government Model Senior Primary School No. 3, Jamkhandi Urdu, Bagalkot, Karnataka.

Translated from Kannada to Hindi by Kiran Manjunath

Translated from Hindi to English by Dimple Mishra; Vetted by Simran Luthra

‘We can bring improvement in the lives of communities through education’ - Meenakshi Arya

Bhaskar Upreti



Meenakshi Arya

Government Primary School Maharaya, Rudrapur, in the Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand, has attracted everyone’s attention for its positive achievements. Meenakshi Arya, a teacher at the school, has not only ensured the enrolment of girls through her consistent efforts, but has also worked to make this sustainable by improving the quality of education. Bhaskar Upreti, a member of the Azim Premji Foundation, spoke to her about her efforts. Some excerpts from the conversation.

Bhaskar Upreti: Meenakshi ji, what are your special memories of your childhood and education?

Meenakshi Arya: I spent my childhood and completed my education in Nainital. It was a modern city, so I received a good education. Yes, I have particularly fond memories of Government Girls’ Inter College, Nainital, where my dreams took shape. The quality of education at the Dev Singh Bisht (Government PG College) Campus of Kumaon University, where I studied, was also excellent. Nainital prepared me for my future life. After getting married, I moved to Meerut, and after some time, I returned to the neighbouring district of Udham Singh Nagar in government service.

Bhaskar Upreti: As a teacher, what would you say about your role in this school?

Meenakshi Arya: I have been at this school since 2014. The first few years were spent understanding the community. There are small and medium farmers here who also work as labourers. I noticed that there were girls in the village, but they were not enrolled or attending school. The few girls who were enrolled continued to be engaged in household chores, including looking after younger children. There was a long struggle over this issue with the community until 2019. When we invited parents to the school, they would not come. In the beginning, even when we went to their homes, they did not like talking to us. It was only gradually that we were able to gain their trust.

Bhaskar Upreti: What efforts did you make to win this trust?

Meenakshi Arya: The first thing was to make the morning assembly interesting. The school is surrounded by the village, so the assembly can be seen from outside. We taught new songs that the students found interesting. We increased the use of musical instruments, such as the *dholak* and drum, and also started using the sound system more. We also started giving students responsibilities for the assembly. These measures were effective in building their self-confidence. I began visiting the homes of families whose girls were not enrolled, using my friendship with the students as a way to establish contact. Driven by traditional thinking, parents would say, ‘What will girls do with an education?’; ‘They should attend to household and farming work,’ and so on. Being sensitive to their concerns, I would simply say, ‘Try sending the girls for a few days and see. You will like it!’ Once the girls started coming to school, the environment of the school changed for the better.

Now, all the girls in the village are enrolled in the school. Their attendance is also better than that of the boys. However, continuing their education after Class V is

still a challenge. The teachers are working together to address this.

So far, three girls have reached Class XII, and two are now studying in high school. I am confident that in the coming time, it will become common for all girls to complete high school and Class XII. Girls who have passed out of the school remain in touch with me and tell me about their struggles and achievements.

Bhaskar Upreti: Was there any initiative in the school that conveyed an impactful message to the community right from the beginning?

Meenakshi Arya: Absolutely! Once the enrolment situation became satisfactory, we felt the need to hold a School Management Committee (SMC) meeting. I invited the parents and shared information with them about the students' academic performance and achievements. Parents were happy when some students from classes IV and V demonstrated that they could read fluently. They were pleased to see the pictures and short stories created by the students. Seeing this, parents who had initially remained indifferent towards the school gradually started attending the meetings. It also made us realise that it is essential to share information about the school processes and students' learning with parents in a transparent manner.



It is important to give students opportunities to read.

Bhaskar Upreti: What was the next stage of your work, and how did it begin?

Meenakshi Arya: While continuing with the morning assembly and communication with parents, I began listening to the personal stories of students. Through child profiling, I tried to gain an insight into their lives and daily routines. In the course of listening to their stories, some reading and writing also happened. I learnt some things that I had not known before, such as which students were facing domestic violence or whose families were in debt, and several other important details. All this proved helpful in my work with the students.

By 2018, the school had settled into a rhythm. Having achieved a positive environment, I could now focus more on academic work. I resolved to ensure foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) among all students. For example, I focused on activities that develop phonological awareness, making the process of moving from letter to sound and sound to letter easier, and so on. I also worked on giving the local or home language a respectful place in the classroom and created opportunities for its continuous use in teaching.

I broke down the learning outcomes into easily achievable goals. For example, students should be able to write familiar words related to their surroundings, develop specific vocabulary, and use those words in different contexts, and so on. One such learning outcome is meaning-making based on pictures and one's own experiences. This can be adapted according to the age and learning level of the students. In Class I, I teach them to look at and examine pictures, while in Class III, I ask them to describe a picture and create a story using their imagination. As a result, students began to recognise and understand the printed material around them. I also encouraged them to write about this.

Bhaskar Upreti: How did you do this in mathematics?

Meenakshi Arya: In mathematics, I used the students' daily life experiences as the basis. For example, many students used to calculate the accounts in shops orally. I explained to them that they could also represent in writing what they did orally. I taught younger students to count using their fingers, pebbles, counting beads, pages, and so on. At the same time, I gave them practice in writing familiar numbers in words, reverse counting, and so on. With older students, activities were conducted around shapes and patterns around them; measuring the dimensions of windows, doors, or the classroom; estimating distances (from home to school) or temperatures; sensing the difference between light and heavy objects; and working with information such as parents' income and kitchen budgets. Positive results of this work done with patience began to emerge, and this became the foundation for working on higher-order skills.

Bhaskar Upreti: Does foundational work make the teacher's subsequent work easier? How?

Meenakshi Arya: Of course! The proficiency in FLN gained by the students was shared with the parents during the SMC meeting. This had a positive impact. Parents began to feel that the school teachers were working seriously for

the benefit of their children. As a result, they too started encouraging their children to do their homework.

This is what happened in mathematics. Once the Class III students became proficient at adding three-digit numbers, including problems involving carrying over, they began to develop an understanding of the concept of addition underlying multiplication. For example, in 7 multiplied by 8, the number 7 occurs 8 times; that is, adding 7 eight times, which makes 56. When students understood that multiplication is actually a shorter and more convenient way of repeated addition, they began using it as a 'tool' for larger numbers as well.

Bhaskar Upreti: There is a great deal of emphasis on the use of libraries in FLN. What kind of work are you doing in the school?

Meenakshi Arya: I first worked on making the library room a pleasant place for students to sit. I organised the books and graded them. Then, with the help of the students, I developed a system for distributing and maintaining the books. A reading time was fixed for each class, which was called 'Reading bell' or 'Joy bell'.

Bhaskar Upreti: With regard to FLN, what did you prioritise at the initial level?

Meenakshi Arya: In the first stage, there were some essential things that all students had to do. For instance, they had to observe things around them carefully. This is where vocabulary begins. Observing the illustrations in the books carefully and discussing them in detail improved the students' observational skills and helped them develop the habit of closely observing and understanding things in their surroundings. They began trying to read the printed material on roadside hoardings, names written on shops, and the wrappers of packets. A rich vocabulary related to the agricultural and industrial surroundings of the school also developed.

Similarly, knowing how to look at a textbook is a library activity. There are exercises to identify the cover and title. Exercises involving counting page numbers help develop a concrete understanding of counting. Students were given opportunities to make predictions based on their reading of books. They began to conjure new and different imaginative guesses about the story *Amma, Sabki Pyari Amma* (*Mother, Everyone's Beloved Mother*). One student was convinced that he would definitely keep a squirrel as a pet.

Bhaskar Upreti: Is it necessary to work separately on letter recognition as well?



Figure 2: The library room should be a pleasant place for students to sit.

Meenakshi Arya: I believe that instead of focusing on the alphabet, students should engage with a book of children's literature. I discuss the subject matter and the illustrations with them as much as possible. Letters and vowel markers are only a small part of the process of learning to read, which they master gradually. I work on FLN for an hour and a half every day. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are crucial to this in a holistic sense.

It is important to give students opportunities to read, listen to their experiences, facilitate writing practice, discuss in detail a poem they like, listen to stories they have read, and present their creativity in the assembly. All this needs to be done as part of FLN.

Bhaskar Upreti: How are you able to assess the impact of your work?

Meenakshi Arya: For me, this is something that should be clearly visible. One day, Umar's mother took him to the hospital with the confidence that he had learnt to read. She believed that he would be able to get the prescription made and would also pay attention while collecting the medicines. His mother is proud of her son because he is being educated. When Sumela was given a picture-story book at the beginning, she looked nervous and started searching for printed words. During a conversation, it became clear that, for her, only printed words constituted reading. When we patiently talked about the pictures in the book, and she understood the story without the words, her perception changed completely. Now she confidently tries to read printed material.

Bhaskar Upreti: What impact has the children's library had on students' learning?

Meenakshi Arya: During the Reading Bell, I started reading stories aloud using gestures and expressions

regularly. This was something I enjoyed, and the students also listened with keen interest. I would pause from time to time and discuss the story with them.

Younger students were given books from the *Barkha Series* to read and look at. The aim of this was to give students opportunities to read independently with understanding. The stories in these books include experiences from the students' own surroundings, which helps create a sense of connection. The illustrations and storylines are simple, and the content is level-appropriate. These books are given to students at the initial stage when they are learning to read. They like them very much, and their learning begins to gain momentum.

The use of children's literature helped dispel the students' fear of books. They got into the habit of looking at the pictures in books. This had an impact on their observation skills. They write in words what they discuss about the pictures and stories. The repeated opportunities to ask and answer questions have improved the students' expression.

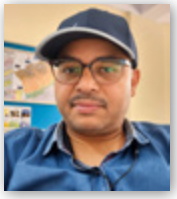
As they developed the habit of self-study, students started to pick up and read many books from the children's library on their own. They read children's magazines enthusiastically and share interesting things with one another.

Bhaskar Upreti: What are your thoughts on teacher professional development? What are the specific things you do for your own continuous development?

Meenakshi Arya: Ever since I understood what professional development for teachers means, I have been conscious of it. Whenever I get an opportunity, I send my experiences to teacher seminars and other such forums. I have also participated in several education seminars at the district and national levels. I keep writing a great deal to understand my work and my own role better.

We have *Srijan Samuh* (Creative Group) here for teachers who are interested in reading and writing. We connect online every week, and many times, we also meet face-to-face. More than 500 articles have been shared in the group, and I have read most of them. Group discussions make it easier to understand the articles. Ramesh Thanvi's article *If the Teacher Does Not Read, the Teacher Does Not Grow* made me think about how we actually look at our work. Rekha Chamoli's *Meri School Diary* (*My School Diary*) proved very useful. *Pehla Adhyapak and Neelbagh ka School* (*The First Teacher and the Neelbagh School*) are books that we teachers need to read. I have now started writing about my experiences with reading, writing, and work. I am recording my experiences on the topic *How Do Children Learn to Read by Understanding?* It will include short stories about children's struggles and achievements in learning to read and write.

Translated from Hindi Translator: Shabnam Sengupta Vetter: Simran Luthra



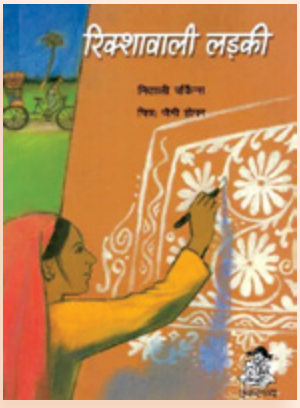
Bhaskar Upreti began his career in journalism, where he worked for a decade. He has been with the Azim Premji Foundation for the past 13 years. Based in Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand, he is currently part of the editorial team of *Pathshala*.

Contact: bhaskar.upreti@azimpremjifoundation.org



Rickshaw Girl

Reviewer: Richa Pandey



Author: Mitali Perkins

Illustrator: Jamie Hogan

Reading age: 7 to 10 years

Print length: 96 pages

Language: Hindi, English and 7 other languages

Publisher: Charlesbridge Publishing

'If you had a talent but society forbade you from using it, how would you feel?' 'I would feel sad and angry,' said a 12-year-old boy. 'I would feel worthless, like I don't have any value,' said an 11-year-old girl. Children as young as 10, 11, or 12 understand how it feels when they are discouraged from using a talent that they have and deeply value. The emotions range from sadness and confusion to feelings of worthlessness and anger.

Imagine discussing the story of *Rickshaw Girl* in a class full of many such children. As they move through the first chapter, they try to guess how old the girl in the story, Naima, is. Most of them think she has to be at least 15 years old because she does household chores that children usually do not do. Others wonder why she does not go to school while her sister does. Some express discomfort with the idea that she has to stop talking to her friend just because he is a boy. Others express discomfort whenever Naima goes through a feeling of helplessness because she is unable to help her parents financially. Because she is a girl. And girls do not go out to work. Girls are *meant* to do household chores.

Rickshaw Girl, a story written by Mitali Perkins and illustrated by Jamie Hogan, is a short novel. The story revolves around Naima, a 10-year-old girl who lives in a village in Bangladesh with her parents and a younger sister. Naima is described as a cheerful and somewhat careless girl who is unusually careful when she paints *alpanas* (decorative patterns and motifs drawn on the floor and walls). Awarded for being the best *alpana* painter in her village, Naima has had to drop out of school as her parents could not afford to send two girls to school.

The novel is divided into 13 chapters, each narrating the inner and outer world of Naima. The first half of the story narrates Naima's failed attempt to ride her father's rickshaw, which leads to a shift in her personality as she feels guilty about adding to her parents' troubles. The second half of the story has Naima figuring out a solution with the help of her friend Saleem. In the process, she discovers that women, contrary to what she had previously known, can do anything, including owning a rickshaw repair shop. The novel ends with Naima's inner voice changing from 'I wish I were born as a boy' to 'It is a good thing that I turned out to be a girl'.

The novel prompts younger readers to question the societal constraints often imposed upon them, while offering parents valuable insight into the inner lives of children. It demonstrates how impactful parents' words are. Naima's father's words that 'both my daughters are as good as a son' help Naima overcome her guilt and continue her passion.

Teachers can use this novel in multiple ways. Naima's story revolves around gender roles and stereotypes, but it is also a symbol of her determination and resilience. Naima's attempt to ride her father's rickshaw to support her family

financially, followed by her resolve to get it repaired in exchange for her *alpana*-making skills, demonstrates the power of determination and resilience. It further shows how role models play a significant role in positively changing the inner voice of children, something that every child benefits from.

The language of the book is a little advanced and occasionally uses literary devices, like similes and personification. Consequently, reading aloud and shared reading would help if the learners are at the beginner or intermediate levels in reading fluency and comprehension.

Using reading strategies like 'prediction' would work well because children can relate to the main character. For instance, when Naima overhears her parents discussing their financial troubles, the teacher can pause and let the children guess what will happen next. 'What do you think the father will do next?' is a question that can be used when Naima's father spots her in the rickshaw repair shop disguised as a boy.

The teacher can differentiate the content by simplifying the story according to the readiness of the learners and providing a word bank for difficult words. To conduct a meaningful discussion, the teacher can add a variety of questions at the end of each chapter. For instance, factual questions like: 'Where does the rickshaw crash?' can be followed by 'Why did Naima ride the rickshaw?' This invites children to respond with inferences. Opinion-based questions like 'What else could Naima have done to help her father?' invite critical thinking. 'Draw the rickshaw before and after the crash' encourages imagination. This also keeps discussions engaging for children who are emergent readers. Questions like 'What would you do if you were in Naima's place?' help develop empathy as they require connecting with the character.

Overall, the book engages the readers' minds and hearts with its relevant storyline as well as emotional undertones. It is suitable for middle school students who are growing up, learning the ways of the world around them and suppressing their frustration due to the restrictions imposed on them by the society they live in.

Richa Pandey is an educator with over 11 years of experience in teaching, curriculum design, and school leadership. She is passionate about building equitable classrooms and helping teachers create meaningful learning experiences for every child.

Translated from Hindi Translator: Pragya P Vetter: Simran Luthra

Malli Goes to the Market

Reviewer: Mahesh Kumar CS

This children's picture book is the third in the Malli series. Colourful and attractive with lively illustrations, it is set against the backdrop of a vibrant village in Tamil Nadu and its local market. The story brings back memories of the village market for those who have seen it, while for those who have not, it sparks a desire to visit and explore the bustling shops and savour local delicacies like rose soda, *thaen mittai*, and peanut *laddoos.*

Through an excellent narrative style and alluring illustrations, the story captures the spirit of friendship as Malli and her friends visit the market, buy their favourite treats, and share them. Just like the prices in the market, the economic and social status among Malli's friends is also diverse. Kadar, Minmini, Johnny, and Thilaka seem to represent various cultural backgrounds. The description of their engagements prior to their market visit brings forth the daily routines of rural children beautifully.

This diversity is reflected in their food preferences. Each one wants to eat a different kind of treat. But not everyone can afford to purchase the treat they want. Some of them have more money while some have less. How should the friends rise above this difference and decide who eats what? The story beautifully blends friendship with financial literacy, such as budgeting and keeping accounts. This unique dynamic between friendship and practical maths highlights Malli's sharp problem-solving skills as she uses it to ensure that everyone gets their favourite treat.

Keeping the narrative descriptions and sequence of events in mind, teachers – while narrating or teaching the story – can draw students' attention to several points that can enrich their experiential and imaginative world.

After reading the line, ‘It was the day of the market in Malli’s village,’ at the start of the story, one student shared that the market, which is held on Mondays in their village, is called ‘Monday market’. Then several other students shared in detail the days on which the market is set up in their village, the names of those markets, and the items available there. The students could understand that traditional village mobile markets are held weekly. They could also understand the difference between these and the store markets in big towns and cities.

The market in this story features the names of various food and beverage items. A discussion on the taste and preparation of these items, along with the students’ likes and interests, can engage students with the story better. They can be asked to draw those food items of their choice. This helps them relate the diversity of food within the context of other diversities. Along with this, the story features the daily routine and lifestyle of the village, the friendships and playfulness of the children, and their mutual trust and shared decisions.



Author: Jeevan Raghunath

Illustrator: Nancy Raj Vimal

Reading age: 3+ years

Page count: 20

Language: (Bilingual) English with eight other languages

Publisher: Tulika Books

The cover illustration of Malli riding a merry-go-round and her expression brilliantly captures the intensity of her childlike joy and wonder at visiting the market. The other illustrations showing the children gathered under the banyan tree to go to the market, the panoramic views of the village and market, and children playing and having fun on the tree branches, draw the children into the story. They also offer many possibilities for conversations with students.

One feature of this story requires particular attention. In children’s literature and textbooks, it is common to find conventional depictions of children visiting a market or fair holding their parents’ hands, under their supervision. In this story, the author has crafted the portrayals of independent children in a nuanced manner through language and dialogue. It is essential to experience those layers.

Malli, on her own (without telling the adults), directly calls out to her friends one by one and asks them about visiting the market. All the children decide for themselves (without asking permission) and show enthusiasm for accompanying Malli to the market. To buy treats at the market, some children ask the adults at their homes – *Amma,* grandma – for change. None of the women asks any questions of the children, nor do they hand the money to them directly. They ask the children to pick up the change themselves from the spots they specify.

There are several such instances throughout the story that organically establish the development of independent children. These are the kind of independent children whose shaping is, or needs to be, envisioned by the education system of any democratic society.

Mahesh Kumar C S is part of the Communications Team (Kannada Initiative) at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru.

Translated from Kannada to Hindi by Kiran Manjunath

Translated from Hindi Translator: Atul Wadhwani Vetter: Sonam Kumari

Let's do some activities!

Activity 1: Ping-pong

Classes: V and VI

Objective: Students listen carefully, think of the sequence and work out what to do next; verify whether their prediction is correct as per the sequence; think of clear ways to communicate with each other.

Materials required: A ball

How to conduct this activity

1. All the students form a circle.
2. The teacher gives them the ball and explains that when they hear 'ping', they must pass the ball to their right, and when they hear 'pong', they must pass it to their left.
3. The teacher gives instructions as 'ping', 'pong' or a combination of these two words ('ping-pong-pong etc). Suppose the order in which the students are standing is clockwise, like this:

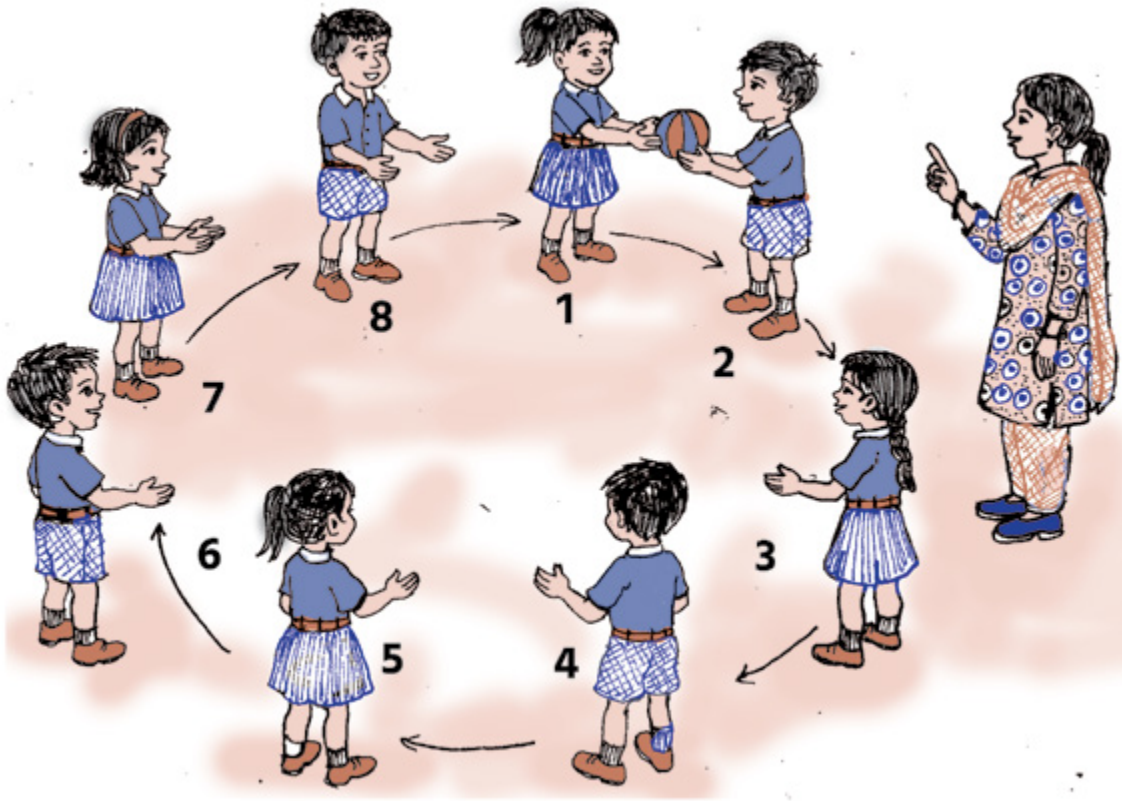


Illustration by Shivendra Pandya

4. If the ball is with the student at 3, and the teacher says, 'ping, pong, pong', then the ball will be passed on to the student at 2 (who is on the right of the student at 3), then the student at 2 will pass it to the student at 3, and the student at 3 will pass it to the student at 4.

5. In the beginning, the teacher may use easy patterns, like ‘ping, pong’ and ‘pong, pong, ping’.
6. Working through the sequence is important until it is clear that all the students understand the activity. Gradually, when the teacher gets a sense that all students have understood what to do, the teacher may call out the patterns using different combinations.
7. When the teacher says: ‘Ping, ping, ping, ping, pong, pong, pong, pong,’ the teacher may show with fingers as they count. Some students may equate this as: four pings and four pongs. The ball goes four times to the right, moves four times again to the left and comes back to the same student who started it. For all students to understand this logic, the teacher must choose the patterns from simple to complex.

Adding complexity

Before calling out, the teacher must think about how the students will interpret a particular pattern, say, pong, pong, ping, pong, ping, ping, pong!

The students should not pass the ball as per the instructions immediately. Instead, the teacher must complete the sequence and randomly pick a student to ask, ‘To whom should the ball go?’

The students have to listen carefully, think of the sequence and work out who should get the ball at the end. Then, they have to verify whether their prediction is correct by passing the ball as per the sequence. A little confusion is expected. But it is also to be noted that the students are attempting to predict. This activity will become more fun once the students grasp the idea.

Note that the sequences are actually an exercise in the addition of small positive and negative integers. So, this game is mental math with integers.

Variations

- Ask one of the students to come to the centre and announce sequences to the others, with the teacher joining the circle along with the students.
- In another variation, anyone who passes to the wrong person is ‘out’, making the circle smaller. Students can themselves announce sequences and then pass the ball to the right person directly without having to pass the ball through the sequence, with the caveat that a wrong pass gets the student out.
- Another way of playing this is to divide the students into groups, say, based on colours: Red, Blue, Green, standing sequentially. (Make sure then that the total number of students in the circle is a multiple of 3.) The rule can then be that a ‘Red’ student can only pass to another ‘Red’ student. Or it can be that a ‘Red’ student can only pass to a ‘Green’ student. Soon, students will make up their own rules/sequence of codes. In this process, they effectively construct algebraic expressions, without consciously realising it.

Observations to be made

The teacher must ensure that all the students are engaged. If some students are not, observe each one closely to see whether a student is keen on passing the ball but cannot tell right from left, or has understood the code but not the sequence, and so on. Accordingly, the teacher can call out the sequences until all the students get a chance to think and play the game as intended.

The teacher has to plan what kind of instructions to give to engage the student who has never had their turn. The teacher may also observe whether the students are able to interpret the instructions given by the teacher properly. If not, the teacher needs to simplify the instructions.

If the ball is not in the correct hand, then how are the students communicating with their peers? The teacher need not be the one teaching all the time; sometimes the students can teach their peers, which is also a good way of learning. However, the teacher should emphasise that if anyone dominates or puts others down, they will be out of the game. In this way, the students think of clear ways to communicate with each other.

Activity 2: Sensory Detectives

Classes: III – V

Objectives: Students move from identification to grouping and differentiating in a fun way.

Materials required: Items from the kitchen/garden, such as fruit, vegetables, grains and a few small boxes.

How to conduct this activity

Place some items, for example, pieces of apple, pieces of cucumber, raw lentils, grains of rice, tulsi leaves, and neem leaves, in separate small boxes.

Students should be able to use any of their senses (touch, smell, taste, hearing) to identify the items.



Illustration by Shivendra Pandya

How to conduct this activity

1. Blindfold a student. The student can begin by shaking a box and trying to identify the item inside from the sound that they hear.

2. If the student cannot identify the item, proceed to the smell trial. The student can open a box and smell to identify the item inside.
3. If the student is unable to identify the items by smell, they may proceed to touch or taste the item.

The teacher can give verbal clues to narrow down the discovery. Throughout the activity, the teacher can prompt the student by asking questions, such as: Are you able to hear? Are you able to smell? What do you think the smell can be – a fruit or leaf? Would you like to touch or taste it? Can you describe the texture? Some students may be introverted and may be hesitant to speak out. So, questions like these may help the student to speak out.

Pairing up

After doing this activity a couple of times, it can be done by the students in pairs, where one student is the 'doer', and the other, the 'prompter' is blindfolded and asks the questions. Between them, they have to ask appropriate questions and identify the items.

This is appropriate for a small class size.

In the end, students can group items based on their characteristics – items having similar smell, texture, shape, taste, or making similar sound, etc. They can add new items that they already know of; for example, they can add lemon to *mosambi* and orange because they have similar texture.

Adding complexity

Once they have grouped items based on a specific category, the teacher needs to ask if they can identify at least one item with a different smell/texture/shape/taste/sound. In the previous example, lemon is different from the other two in taste and size.

Additionally, the next day, each student can bring to school one item of their choice for this game. The teacher can then have the students group the items based on their characteristics.

These activities have been suggested by Krithika, a member of the Communications team at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. Krithika has a deep interest in computational thinking, for which she would like to acknowledge her association with CSpathshala.



We've got mail!

Article unlocks ways to free the classroom from fear

In his article 'How I Created a Fear-Free Classroom' published in Issue 28 of *Pathshala*, Rakesh Shivnath Rajput says that he refuses to be a teacher in the traditional sense; rather, he would recreate the role as a facilitator for himself. This is also evident in his classroom. The teacher's acceptance of an activity-based approach in the classroom, along with treating mistakes as a natural part of the learning process, has helped create a fear-free and joyful classroom environment. At the same time, removing the pressure of formal examinations made the classroom cheerful and vibrant. The article documents practical experiences of transforming diffident students into active learners.

Sarojini Rawat, Assistant Teacher, Government Primary School Khara Srot, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand

Some unique experiences recorded in Tahira Khan's article

Tahira Khan's article, 'A Corner to Read is a Window to Learning' on the Reading Corner, published in Issue 28 of *Pathshala*, shows that a Reading Corner is not merely a collection of books but an effective way to support students' holistic development. When students have opportunities to talk, ask questions, share their experiences and participate in activities alongside reading, their learning becomes more meaningful and enjoyable. A Reading Corner not only enhances the students' interest in reading but also develops their expression, imagination, reasoning ability and sensitivity. It can significantly improve the quality of their learning.

Anup Kumar Shukla, Azim Premji Foundation, Bero, Ranchi, Jharkhand

An important article linked to school processes

In his article 'Creating a Culture Through School Processes' published in Issue 28 of the magazine, Ardhendu Shekhar Dash discusses the influential role played by schools within a community. When students were asked how they learned to navigate difficult circumstances with such patience and calm, their response, 'We learned at school,' reflects the honest communication and positivity between the teacher and the students. In the school environment, students imbibe values and a spirit of cooperation, harmony, discipline, acceptance, etc., which play a pivotal role in shaping their future.

Dinesh Mangal, Teacher, Government Primary School Alipura, Bhagwanpura, Nagaur, Rajasthan

The Early Childhood Education special issue will always remain useful

The articles published in *Pathshala*'s *Early Childhood Education* special issue suggest that *Anganwadi* centres should be attractive and joyful from children's perspective, and this is the responsibility of *Anganwadi* workers. Moreover, they should be willing to listen to children with motherly warmth and affection. We know that mental development up to age 3 impacts children for many years to come. If *Anganwadi* workers conduct preschool teaching sessions according to weekly and daily plans, significant changes can be seen among children of this age. The special issue contains articles on all these points, which is why it will remain useful for years to come.

Manjula, Anganwadi Teacher, Indergi, Koppal, Karnataka

I will try to adopt the approaches described in the articles in my class

The articles in *Pathshala* offer us an opportunity to discover new ways of teaching and learning through the experiences of other teachers. In Issue 28, I read useful articles by Tahira Khan and Anshika Sharma on the Reading Corner. There is also a Reading Corner in my classroom, but I had previously viewed it only in relation to language teaching. I realise now that the books in the Reading Corner can be a medium not only for language but also for environmental studies, mathematics

and other subjects. Students can be given opportunities to discuss, share their thoughts, ask questions and engage in interdisciplinary learning after reading the books. I will try to adopt the approaches described in these articles in my class.

Lekha Gupta, Teacher, Primary School Ghasipura, Phanda Rural, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Impressed by the real-life experiences and dialogues in the article

After reading Tahira Khan's article published in Issue 28 of the magazine, I realised that a Reading Corner is not just a space where students read books; it is an effective medium to enrich the entire learning process. The real classroom experiences and conversations with students described in the article impressed me because they made it clear that when students can read books of their choice, discuss them and share their experiences, they learn with greater enthusiasm and can connect subjects to their own lives. A Reading Corner increases the students' interest in reading and strengthens their confidence.

Ranjita Chauhan, Primary School Netanagar, Cluster Jhalmala, Development Block Pusaur, Raigarh, Chhattisgarh

A timeline built around familiar events and an understanding of history

In the article 'Understanding Timelines in History' published in Issue 28, author Himanshu Khole explains why it is important to understand historical dates and periods. He says dates and periods not only create awareness of history but also help in understanding it. Where should we begin when learning history? To answer this, we start from the ancient era, racking our brains and memorising a heavy tome of dates with boredom. Moving away from this conventional method of teaching, the author uses recent events to help us understand history. Offering a different perspective, this article explores medieval Indian history through events such as a birthday in a student's family, the first well in a village, the first paved road and the digging of a borewell.

Zulfiqar Ali, Azim Premji Foundation, Ramnagar, Nainital, Uttarakhand

Developing a reading culture is essential for becoming a proficient reader

Teacher Tahira Khan's article on the usefulness of the 'Reading Corner' in primary education highlights its importance in a highly practical and inspiring way. Children's literature is not limited to teaching language; it can also be a lively medium for understanding mathematical calculations, geometric shapes, environmental studies and social issues such as gender discrimination. The teacher's actual classroom experiences and activities conducted with the students show that the developing a reading culture not only helps students become proficient readers but also encourages them to think, reason and write creatively. This is a useful article for teachers and teacher educators.

Kendra Pratap Singh, Assistant Teacher, Upper Primary School Mirzapur, Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh

I use the 'Let's Try It' activities in my classroom

In the December 2025 issue of *Pathshala*, I read the activity 'Let's Make Patterns'. I am happy to say that I have also done the activities from this issue in my class. The activities given in 'Let's do some activities!' are very useful for children. I regularly adapt them slightly according to the teaching environment in my class. *Anganwadi* centres can be empowered with such useful activities. The more attractive the activities for children, the more interesting the *Anganwadi* centres will become. These activities give me a new perspective on my understanding and on teaching them to the children. I am making my classroom even more enthusiastic.

Lalita S Arera, Anganwadi Worker, Alwandi–No.4 Anganwadi, Koppal, Karnataka

This article is quite effective in developing an understanding of place value

Reading Abhay Kumar's article 'Place Value Step by Step in My Classroom' helps develop a solid understanding of place value and how to teach this concept to students in the classroom. Moving on to other operations without a firm understanding of place value can make learning more challenging for younger students. In this context, the article is very effective in developing this understanding in the simplest possible way.

Sandeep Kumar Jain, Principal, Government Primary School Sardarpura, Uniara, Tonk, Rajasthan

The section should include critical responses

I am pleased to see a fine balance between the diversity of subjects, authenticity of experiences and simplicity of language in Issue 28 of *Pathshala*. The articles in this issue are practical and inspirational for teachers and can be implemented directly in the classroom.

I would also like to share a few suggestions. For example, an excerpt could be chosen for the pullquote that conveys the article's essence in slightly different words from the main text — that is, a summary rather than a quotation. In such a situation, the pullquote will add value rather than merely repeat it. In the 'We've got mail' column, occasionally including a letter that expresses disagreement or raises a question could also make the magazine's dialogue livelier.

Ananas Kumar, Azim Premji Foundation, Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand

Pathshala is useful for teachers, parents and those interested in education

The magazine highlights the close relationship between the lessons learned 'inside' the school and the social, cultural and family environment 'outside' it. It is a must-read not only for teachers but also for every parent and anyone interested in education who wants to understand the education system and students' mental development.

Ashwini Sampath, Anganwadi Worker, Hospur block, Chamarajanagar, Karnataka

Translated from Hindi Translator: Swati Singh Vettor: Bhumika Popli

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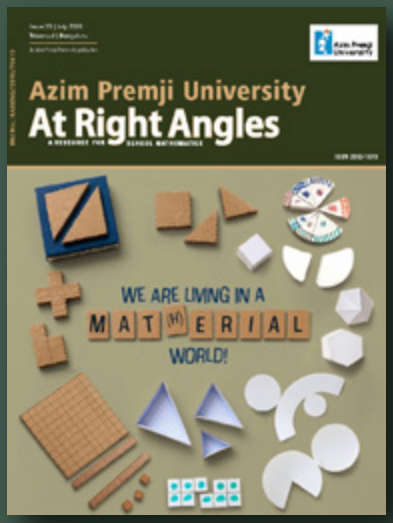

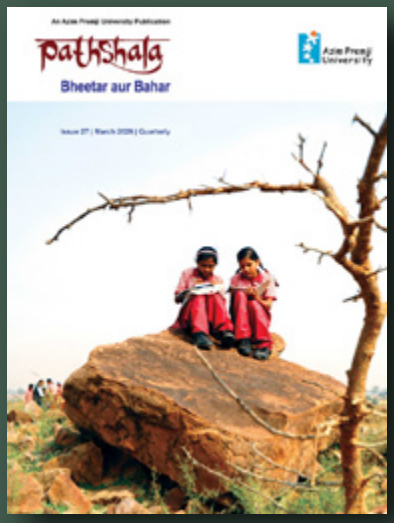







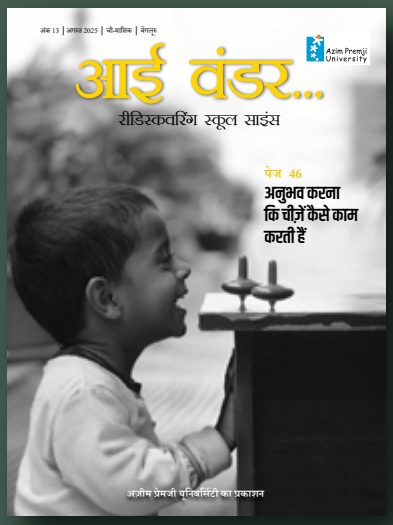

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