

LANGUAGE

कैकरी



Observation and representation

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सुनील टेकसटाईल क्लाथ एजेंसी

सालीमपुर अहरा, धुबान्ग जिला

पटना 800003

गोपाल कुमार अग्रवाल पटना

As already pointed out, Eklavya's experience in the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme clearly indicated the low levels of both receptive and productive language skills among Class VI children. The listening and reading comprehension abilities were so low that children were often unable to follow even simple instructions in Hindi. In the case of speaking and writing the situation was worse. Children were generally shy and hesitant to speak in the class. Prashika felt that teachers were often playing the 'guess-what's-in-my-mind' game with children. They were not interested in listening to what children had

PROFICIENCY LEVELS OF HINDI . . .

A pilot study conducted in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh showed that the average proficiency level of 15-year-old rural children in the comprehension of standard Hindi was about 33 per cent. Over 166 students were examined in both the Hindustani and Sanskritized styles of Hindi and it was found that over 72 per cent students needed help with reading comprehension. Schooling, seen in terms of Hindi as the medium of instruction, educational facilities available and proximity of the school to urban areas, correlated highly significantly with proficiency in Hindi.

to say. The written samples of children's work showed wide divergences from standard Hindi morphology and syntax. It must be pointed out that the above description of the linguistic abilities of children is based on keeping standard Hindi as a reference point. In situations which were not threatening and where the target was not the use of standard Hindi, children often provided lively descriptions of their experiences in their own languages, often borrowing from Hindi.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEYS

Early sociolinguistic surveys showed the following.

1. The language used in textbooks and schools was highly formal and Sanskritized. It was far removed from the tribal and regional languages used by children at home and in peer group interaction.
2. The use of regional varieties of Hindi or of tribal languages was highly stigmatized in the classroom.
3. The state curriculum focused on reading, almost excluding the skills of speaking and writing.
4. The language material used in textbooks was generally uninteresting and often had strong moral undertones.

5. Teaching strategies were essentially linear starting with alphabets and words in isolation and leading on to decontextualized sentences.
6. Successful learning consisted of reproducing memorized texts and answers. There was no space for the creativity of the child.

NATIVE LANGUAGES VS STANDARD HINDI

Prashika strongly felt that children should receive education in their own languages. It would not only make the task of learning easier and more enjoyable but would also help these hitherto neglected languages to grow. It was felt that no language is inherently superior or inferior and that the question of the prestige and status of a language was essentially a socio-political and not a linguistic question. Linguistically speaking, all languages were equally systematic and rule-governed and could potentially be used for all literary and scientific activities. Prashika saw language not only as a medium of communication but also as a marker of group identity and as a phenomenon that is inextricably intertwined with our thought processes.

Historically, societies have often used languages associated with elite and powerful groups for cultural domination, stigmatizing and ridiculing the languages.

associated with the poor and weak sections of society. There was thus a very strong motive in Prashika to produce language-learning materials in the native language of the children. The idea of dividing the area covered by Prashika into different language districts was seriously explored, hoping that each area would have a book written in its particular language.

Prashika tried out some materials in local lan-

PRASHIKA WRITES TO SOME RESOURCE
PEOPLE . . .

We have been doing some exploratory studies in language and mathematics. We have got a whole lot of sentences spoken and written by children and we are trying to compare them with the corresponding sentences in standard Hindi. We really don't know how to handle the variety of linguistic behaviour we encounter here.

guages in some of its schools. It also toyed with the idea of producing a single text with multilingual glosses for various lexical items. However, it became evident that every area was essentially multilingual in character. Often the same class had children speaking different varieties of Hindi and various tribal languages.

Secondly, the members of the group had no competence in the local languages and no experience of producing teaching materials in these languages. It was also felt that knowledge of standard Hindi was essential to enable these children to participate actively and meaningfully in the mainstream life of the country.

Prashika it seems was caught on the horns of a dilemma. There were compelling socio-political and academic reasons for producing teaching material in the local languages on the one hand, and equally strong pressures on the other to use standard Hindi, notwithstanding the problem associated with producing teaching materials in the local languages. Over a

A PRASHIKA MEMBER OBSERVED . . .

Dialect variations were huge. Even a cluster of 4 or 5 villages could not be clubbed together. In fact, the same class had children speaking different languages and dialects. Writing in dialects posed a serious problem. Whole chunks could be read in standard Hindi but dialect writing was segmented and had to be read bit by bit. Dialects were not accepted in written forms. We did not feel justified in producing pedagogical arguments in favour of only one or two dialects.

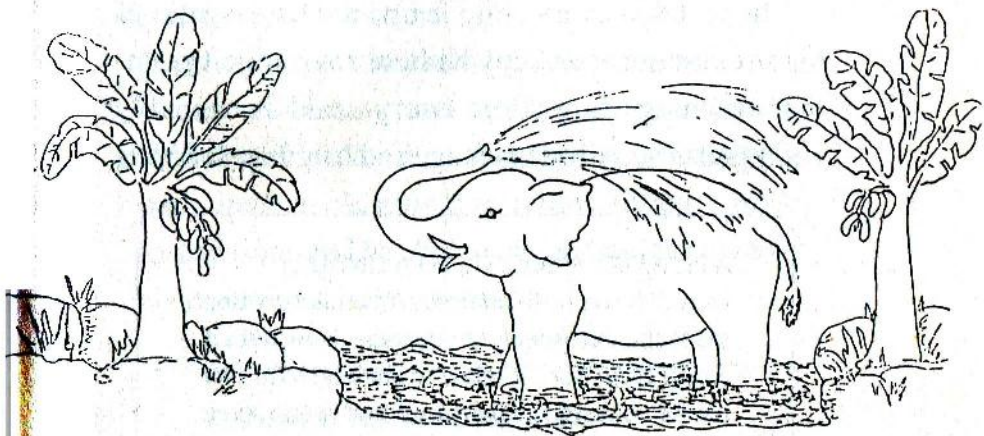
period of time Prashika evolved an understanding regarding the use of different languages in the curriculum in which the language of the children could have dignity. It was decided that the use of native languages would be encouraged in school and all possible efforts would be made to sensitize teachers to linguistic variability. It was strongly felt that multilingualism was an asset rather than a disadvantage.

It was also decided that there would be no textbook for the first six months for primary education and that the native languages of the children would be used freely for all educational purposes in this period. The Prashika books were to be written in standard Hindi but not in the highly Sanskritized formal variety that characterizes most Indian textbooks. The variety of Hindi to be used in Prashika was supposed to be simple and closer to everyday speech.

HOW IS A LANGUAGE LEARNT?

For Prashika language is not merely a question of form. It is also a question of use in context. Language is seen as located in a social context where its use varies according to the people, the place and the subject involved. Even in monolingual societies different domains of activities are characterized by different linguistic vocabulary and idiom. In multi-

हाथी



जब पानी में जाता हाथी
 भर भर सूंड नहाता हाथी ।
 कितने केले खाता हाथी
 यह तो नहीं बताता हाथी ।
 धम्मक धम्मक आता हाथी
 धम्मक धम्मक जाता हाथी ।

जल - जाल		ज - जा
नर - नार		न - ना
जाता खाता		

हाथ - हाथी		य - धी
पान - पानी		न - नी
हाथी पानी		

lingual societies these roles may be fulfilled by different languages.

The fact that every child learns the language(s) of his environment perfectly without any explicit grammar teaching shows that every child is mentally equipped to acquire a language and language learning

A PRASHIKA ASSOCIATE TO A LINGUIST . . .

I have always been interested in understanding the technical aspects of language. How does it work? How does it relate to society? Will you please come to Hoshangabad and spend some time with us? What I really want to know is whether what I have intuitively felt about the nature of language is really true.

is essentially a matter of exposure and contextualization. It is possible that optimal language learning takes place when the focus is on anything other than the language itself. Language could not possibly be learnt by segmenting texts and arranging them in some order of hierarchical difficulty. Language learning is not a linear or additive process. Chunks of language along with their social correlates are probably internalized as wholes. It was most important, Prashika felt, to involve children in interesting and creative activities.

OBJECTIVES

Against this background Prashika tried to fulfil the following objectives.

1. Make the experience of language learning joyful.
2. Enhance listening and reading comprehension abilities of children so that they could actively participate in classroom activities, follow simple instructions and be able to understand the materials used in primary education.

A RESOURCE PERSON TO PRASHIKA . . .

We must try to make the children talk a lot. All these games should not end up as mere action and movement. We are not just teaching language structures. We are involved in a process of helping these children to articulate their joys and sorrows.

3. Enhance speaking and writing abilities so that children could express their ideas clearly, precisely and with confidence.

Prashika does not perceive language abilities as discrete skills. These skills are linked to each other in a fundamental way and the neglect of any one of them may eventually retard the overall language proficiency. Prashika also perceives language as spread



दाईं आखर प्रेम का



प्रिय साधना

आपका पत्र 24.11.90 को मिला आपने पत्र जल्दी भेजने को कहा लेकिन यहां महाराष्ट्र सरकार ने पेट्रोल डीजल में कटौती कर 2150 एस.टी. बसेस कम की है। जिसकी वजह से 20-25 हजार कामगार कर्मचारियों को काम से निकाला जायेगा। और आम जनता विधार्थियों को भी बड़ी अशुविधा हो रही है। इसलिये हमने एक परच निकाला और सही मुहिम कर रहे हैं। इसी काम से लगे रहने से पत्र देने में देर हुई है। आपने होशंगाबाद विज्ञान के लिये लेख मांगा है लेकिन मैं लेख के रूप में शापद नहीं लिख पाउंगी। फिर भी कोशिश करती हूँ। मैं निर्मला स्वी मंच थनीक एकता ग्रुप में काम करती हूँ। वैसे मैं राजनीतिक-सामाजिक काम में 82 से जुड़ी हूँ।

मुझे तीसरी कक्षा पास करने के पहले ही स्कूल छोड़ना पड़ा उसका कारण मेरे पिताजी पुलिस में नौकरी करते थे। हम दो बहने थीं बड़ी बहन मेरे से 6-7 साल बड़ी थी। वो 7 वीं में और मैं 2 री में पड़ते थे कि पिताजी एकाएक बीमार हो गये और कुछ दिन के बीमारी के बाद चल बसे तब मैं 8 सालकी थी।

उसके बाद हम लोग पांच भां, दो बहने और दादी अमरावती जिले में मोर्रा रोड पर पिताजी के गांव रहने आये। दादी खेत में काम करके हम लोगों का पालन कर रही थी। वही मुझे 3 री में डाला गया पिताजी के जाने का दुख और बाहर दुनिया का व्यवहार मां ने कभी देखा नहीं था इसलिये वो हमेशा बीमार रहने लगी उसके इलाज के लिये गांव-गांव के ओझों के पास कोई डाक्टर के पास जाना हो तो हमारी दादी पूरे परिवार को ले जाती थीं की लड़कियों को कहाँ रखे। ऐसे में ही मां भी चल गयी उसके बाद बहन भी बीमार रहने लगी फीर से उनके इलाज में भी वही चक्कर चला और 6-8 महिने बाद वो भी चल बसी।

उसी वक्त आर्थिक तबाह भी था। पिताजी का जो थोड़ा बहुत पैसा मिला या वो दोनों मां बेटी के इलाज में खर्च होने को आया था। और ये सब घटनाओं से जुड़ी दादी और मेरे बाल मन पर बहुत बड़ा आघात था। दादी बीमार रहने के साथ-साथ मानसिक संतुलन भी खो बैठी थी। अब दोनों का पेट पालना मेरे जिम्मे था। और मैं खेत में काम करने जाती थी। ऐसे में कुछ महिने बाद दादी भी चल





बगी और मैं फिर कभी स्कूल का दरवाजा नहीं देख पाई। मुझे पढ़ने का चाव बचपन से था लेकिन पढ़ने के लिये कुछ मिल नहीं पाता था। जो बच्चे स्कूल जाते उनकी बालभारती लेके मैं उस वक्त पड़ती थी। दादी जान के बाद पिताजी के मामा नागपुर से मुझे सहारा देने आये और मैं नागपुर चली आई। यहां घरकाम के बदले दो वक्त की रोटी तो मिलती थी लेकिन पांव पड़ने के बाद भी लूल जाने को नहीं मिला। काका ये जो 11 पास थे और वो घर में मुलशन नंदा, रानू के उपन्यास लाते थे कभी जानूमी उपन्यास लाते थे। ये ही सब मैं टाइम मिलने पर पड़ती थी। आज मैं पढ़ना भुली नहीं तो इसका कारण मैं जो भी कचरा पड़ी लेकिन मैं अपनी पड़ाई उती उपन्यास के कारण जिन्दा रख पाई और न्युज पेपर जब भी मिले पड़ती थी।

काम की चीजे पढ़ने को तो 82 में संघटन से जुड़ने के बाद ही मिला और तब से ही मार्क्स-लेनिन, औरतों की पत्रिका पडने को मिली गोरखों की मां पडने से मुझे बहुत प्रेरणा मीली। वेसे साथी नीता और बाकी साथीयों ने भी प्रेरणा देने का काम हमेशा किया है।

आज मैं पड पाती हूं। उसकी मुझे खुशी है कि कोई दूसरा ब्यक्ति पढ़के सुनाये उससे खुद पढ़के समझने में ज्यादा आसानी होती है। और पढ़ना-लिखना आने से बेसक आंदोलन के काम में मदद भी होती है। मैं कभी परचा-पोस्टर भी लिखती हूं जो मजदूर साथी पढ़ नहीं

पाते तो कभी-कभी उन्हें परचा या मजदूरों सबधी कोई सहित्य है तो पढ़के सुनाती समझाती हूं। मुझे लगता है कि पढ़ना लिखना आना आंदोलन के लिये काम की बात है। आज मजदूरों में एक बात हमेशा सुने को मिलती है कि आंदोलन का नेतृत्व करने के लिये पड़ा लिखा ही ब्यक्ति होना जरुरी है।

मुझे लगता है काम चल नके इतना भी यदि मजदूर पढ़ना लिखना सीखेंगे तो आंदोलन का नेतृत्व अच्छे से कर सकता है। पढ़ना याने स्कूल में रडामार पढाई की बात मैं नहीं कहूंगी। राजनैतिक, सामाजिक रोज की घटने वाना घटना से संबंधित है।

आज की स्थिति में मजदूर कहता है हमें कहां वजन मिलता है। ये सब पढ़ने का बात कुछ हद तक सच भी है। लेकिन बहुसंख्यक निरक्षर मजदूर वर्ग रहे तो कुछ पड़े लिखे लोग ही हम पर हुकूमत करते रहेंगे और हम हमारी पीडा को समझने में भी असमर्थ रहेंगे।

महत्त्वा मुझे के बारे में अपने विचार इसलिए भेज रही हूं कि उन्होंने पढ़ाई के क्षेत्र में महत्वपूर्ण कार्य किया।

धन्यवाद,

आपकी साथी
प्यार के रूप
निर्मला

(एक में अभिन्न भावनाओं को देखते हुए उसे बिना किसी परिवर्तन के छाना जा रहा है - संपादक)



over the whole curriculum. It is a medium through which knowledge in other disciplines is acquired; reciprocally, knowledge of other subjects enriches language proficiency. It has been Prashika's endeavour to familiarize children with different registers of a language.

Prashika feels that it is important to realize that a child comes to school with a fully developed language. It is an asset, the importance of which should never be lost sight of. The multilingual nature of the classroom can certainly be used as a resource. Two issues that Prashika has been consistently concerned with are: the difference between spoken and written language, and the role of grammar teaching in language learning.

In spoken language, we use not only words, but variations in intonation in order to convey our meaning. Intonation, pitch and speed of speech communicate a great deal. For instance, a statement can become a question simply by a rising intonation at the end. Saying something angrily or with a laugh can change the meaning. In addition, we also use non-verbal signals to communicate. Gesticulating with our hands or bodies, facial expressions and looks and the ways in which we exploit space in conversation are examples of this. Those who speak more effec-

tively take care to use variations in sound, gestures and facial expressions and a careful use of the space available to them to convey their meaning.

While learning spoken language it is necessary that a child gets the opportunity to put into use all these devices. That is why acting in poems and stories, mime, role-play, enactment, etc. is part of Prashika's curriculum.

This kind of communication, however, can take place only face to face. You cannot obviously send your gestures and intonations in a letter. Faced with written language devoid of these non-verbal cues, children experience great difficulty in understanding it. Many more words and sentences have to be included to make the context clear. However, as it would require too many sentences to make everything about the context clear, there is often much that is left to be inferred. In order to read and understand something, then, children have also to learn to infer the context and create meaning for themselves.

Similarly, in writing children need to be able to recognize what aspects are necessary to recreate the context in the reader's mind. This necessitates taking into account the interests, abilities, experience and the information level of the audience when using the written form. Then children naturally have difficulty

on first coming into contact with written material.

About the place of grammar in language teaching, the question is: Should we teach grammar explicitly? Will it accelerate the process of language learning? These questions have always worried Prashika. All children learn their first language perfectly without any exposure to its grammatical rules; the grammar is automatically abstracted from the context. But on the other hand, it is very tempting to teach explicit algorithms which may take care of several mistakes. Prashika has insisted on the principles of natural language learning. There should be as little of explicit grammar teaching as possible. On the other hand, Prashika has tried very hard to create contexts of different kinds which would creatively engage the cognitive abilities of children and encourage them to

A PRASHIKA MEMBER OBSERVED . . .

We tried to record natural conversations of children and failed miserably. We neither had the professionalism nor the necessary equipment for such a project.

arrive at generalizations based on their observations of language data. Concerning the teaching of writing, Prashika feels that children are best introduced to

writing not through a hierarchical progression from alphabets to words, sentences and paragraphs but through attempts at writing what children wish to see written. Meaningful context and active child participation were keys to both spoken and written language.

LANGUAGE TEACHING MATERIALS AND METHODS

Keeping the above principles and objectives in mind Prashika set out to produce teaching materials and

A PRASHIKA TEACHER COMMENTS . . .

Yes, children have improved a lot. They can draw pictures, tell stories and recite poems. Their general knowledge has also improved. They can now read a newspaper. Their essays are now more original.

aids and evolve teaching methodologies that could motivate learners to participate actively in their learning activities. A very important aspect of this project was classroom observation and intense collaboration with teachers.

The first stage of the Prashika language curriculum consists of a variety of listening and speaking activi-

ties. A variety of activities involving concrete objects, picture cards, stories and poems have been created to provide opportunities to listen and speak. The activities centred round concrete objects involving discrimination, sorting, classification, shape and sound recognition, games involving the use of pictures and alphabet cards etc. also serve as pre-reading activities. The first six months of the first year are centred around these activities exclusively. The earliest written materials were based on what children were already familiar with or sometimes created on the basis of the oral text produced by children themselves. The guiding principle in producing these materials has been: their content should be interesting and meaningful to children and they should be written in a language that is comprehensible to children. In many cases the materials were tried out in different schools and were modified on the basis of the feedback from children and teachers.

One of Prashika's major achievements is the *Khushi-Khushi* series of books. *Khushi-Khushi* books are not just language teaching books. They attach equal importance to maths and social science. It was appropriate to talk about *Khushi-Khushi* here not only because the language component dominates the first two books but also because *Khushi-Khushi* books are

中水月
秋行地園

群園懷松

使詩人笑

尤梓浩落

一

與能無快

אשר יאמר
לעשר האומות
האז ומתהוה
ליתחן חותש
ליתחן חותש
ליתחן חותש

पञ्चमः	अक्षरः	वर्णः	संख्या	वर्णः	संख्या	वर्णः	संख्या	वर्णः	संख्या	वर्णः	संख्या
अ	ख	श	१	ख	१	श	१	ख	१	श	१
ब	ख	श	१	ख	१	श	१	ख	१	श	१
...

खुशी
खुशी
 कक्षा ५ भाग १

१. ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय
 २. श्रीगणेशाय नमः
 ३. श्रीकृष्णाय नमः
 ४. श्रीराधाय नमः
 ५. श्रीमदध्यात्मसूत्राय नमः
 ६. श्रीमद्भगवद्गीताय नमः
 ७. श्रीमद्वाल्मीकिरामायणाय नमः
 ८. श्रीमद्महाभारतस्य नमः
 ९. श्रीमद्महाभारतस्य नमः
 १०. श्रीमद्महाभारतस्य नमः

factum conditum quadrup
 pama bar acti. Curru ut
 um i una qualis pugna co
 ngrate. Unum sup nupino
 cilum. qm mlin uruy qnato

insucaila .  psic uttemmur
 unilla quassimepsidus ayb: Orea

an effective illustration of 'language across the curriculum' principle. Though Prashika found it very difficult to evolve the language dialect controversy it seems to have succeeded admirably in breaking down the inhibition of children and providing them ample opportunities for fresh and authentic articulation.

ON THE NATURE OF KHUSHI-KHUSHI

Khushi-Khushi books are different from traditional textbooks or workbooks. The concern in preparing these books has been to achieve a meaningful interaction between the learner, teacher and learning material. The books do not set out to impose any authoritative, conceptual and sequential framework on the children and teachers. Traditionally textbooks aim at covering a given syllabus. They are generally organized into unimaginative lessons and mechanical exercises. They in fact often end up discouraging children and teachers from being imaginative and creative. *Khushi-Khushi* has been designed in such a way that

1. it does not become the sole and authoritative educational material. Though important, it is only a part of a curriculum which includes a host of other activities and objectives. Moreover, it is based on other classroom activities in terms of

what has been done, what is being done and what is likely to be done.

2. there is something to do on every page – something that children will find interesting. For many of these activities children are not dependent on the teacher. They can do them on their own or in groups.
3. a variety of academic activities get related to a single source which in essence is very interesting to children. It could be a poem, a picture or a story. It is interesting to note how a variety of sensory-motor, cognitive, linguistic and logico-mathematical abilities can be initiated in the activities associated with a single page.
4. a sense of freedom is felt throughout the book. The teacher is free to select any page in consonance with the abilities of the learners. Children themselves may be doing different activities at the same time. Since the pages are in a certain order, there is obviously a kind of sequence which, to some extent, reflects Prashika's understanding of the ways in which children learn. It is, however, a very flexible sequence.

Khushi-Khushi books are designed to be a bridge between the concrete and the abstract and they do so in the following ways.

1. The books help the teacher in sequencing, linking and assessing various classroom activities. Before using a page, a number of activities might be necessary in order to reach the point where the page might be used. In this way the books bring together activities which might otherwise be discrete.
2. The books also allow the teacher to assess what has been happening in the classroom (say, on a weekly basis). For instance, if a substantial number of children are unable to do a classification activity page, he knows what to emphasize next. So even if the next activity happens to be primarily a poem or a counting exercise, he can still weave classification into it.
3. The books are often used as exercise books also where errors are not something to be abhorred. Since every page allows a variety of activities, there is plenty of chance for the child to practise and improve.
4. Apart from helping in sequencing and reinforcing, the workbooks play the important role of *introducing new elements*, and new degrees of complexity. In the movement from the concrete to the abstract, the abundant use of pictures plays an important role. Classification activities, which

were done with concrete, tangible objects, then with picture cards or objects (still physically manipulable), have now taken a different form. Classification is now done from a group of pictures printed on a page, making the activity intellectually and linguistically more challenging. Similarly, numerical and logico-mathematical concepts, too, move from concrete objects to pictures and, of course, finally to symbols.

5. In addition, there are also more specific objectives. For example, exposure to written material in script size more compatible to children's perception, even if they can't read to begin with, can serve as a tool for word recognition and hence learning reading.
6. Finally, it is hoped that these books would also serve to help children (especially those who have limited exposure to visual or written material) look upon a *book as a means of communication*. At present a book is only something to copy meaninglessly from, a symbol of authority. *Khushi-Khushi* makes the medium meaningful.

CONSTRAINTS ON KHUSHI-KHUSHI

The biggest constraint on the production of the workbook has been to keep the production cost low. Since

the books had to be produced at a very low cost

1. it was not possible to have any coloured pictures in the book. It is expected that children will colour different pictures in the book themselves.
2. Prashika had to limit the number of pages. Ideally it would have liked to provide the children with sufficient quantities of paper which they could use for drawing, colouring, craft, etc. The first impulse of rural children, whose contact with paper is extremely limited, is to run wild and use it in a variety of ways. However, Prashika did manage to include in the workbooks a few blank sheets which the children could use as they wished.