

space. Participants from Jamia expressed the need for more workshops, particularly those related to language pedagogy, and the screening of films pertaining to educational and social issues. Some participants asked for a focused workshop on major educational psychologists such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner.

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Workshop on Language and Language Teaching in Schools at SCERT, Patna

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Introduction

A workshop on language and language teaching in schools was held from 19 to 21 July 2012 at the SCERT, Patna campus. It was organized by SCERT in collaboration with Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur. It was attended by the faculty members of DIETs and Primary Teacher Training colleges, people from Gyanshala, team members of Vidya Bhawan, faculty members of SCERT and an education specialist from UNICEF.

The purpose of the workshop was to present to the language teachers a platform on language teaching that was innovative, in tune to innate and natural ability of the child (however, it also focused holistically on the entire gamut of the learning process of the child at the school level). The event was unique in the sense that for the first time, teacher educators and all other participants got opportunities to think on different dimensions of language and its teaching process in the schools that till date are largely archaic and not willing to give 'space' to the child in the whole activity.

Proceedings

The workshop began by a brief introduction of the guest experts, Prof Rama Kant Agnihotri, renowned linguist and Prof A L Khanna (both formerly at University of Delhi). It was followed by the introduction of participants wherein they were also asked to mention the language/ languages they knew. More importantly, the participants also mentioned what they expected from these types of workshops and the kind of difficulties they faced in language and in its teaching. It was also reiterated by the experts that the workshop was not on Hindi language but on language and on language teaching.

Multilingualism is natural and inseparable was evident in the introductory session of the workshop when attendees mentioned their ability to write and speak these languages - Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Angika, Bangla, Urdu, Punjabi, Maithali, Santhali, Himachali, Vajjika etc. It reflected that generally one person knows more than one language and multilingualism is quite natural. This factual revelation emphatically underlined the fact that all countries of the world are multilingual. There is no regional language but there is a region of language. The other things which prominently surfaced in the introductory session were the mistakes a child normally commits in *matra*, *varna*, *ucharan* (pronunciation), *linga* (gender). To them these mistakes are due to environment, society they are/ were in. They were also willing to know mechanism to overcome these problems.

After the completion of the introductory session, a sheet was given to each participant containing 10 statements about different aspects of language. A few are reproduced below:

1. Hindi is not the national language of India.
2. India has over 1500 languages.
3. There are 18 languages in the 8th schedule of the Indian constitution.

Some of the statements seemed to test information but through these statements an attempt was made to assess the conceptual thinking of the attendees on language. The paper was not meant to gauge the knowledge level of the participants; contrary to it, it was aimed at understanding opinion, attitude, views and thinking process of participants on language and its teaching process in the schools. Responses of the participants reflected their understanding on the status of language, constitutional provisions for languages, evolution of Indian languages, status of Sanskrit (people generally consider it the mother of Indo-European languages of the world; Sanskrit is actually mother of only Indo-Aryan languages), status of Hindi language in the country, learning process of language of a child. Most of the participants were not aware that Hindi is not our national language. This exercise was done to get the wider perspective of the attendees on different dimensions of languages and role of societal, political and historical factors in the recognition and status of languages. Emphatic attention was drawn on multilingualism and a reminder that the constitutive feature of India is heterogeneity of language, religion and culture and this unique feature supports and hastens rather than retards the process of learning language/ languages.

The concluding session of the first day concentrated on the structure of words. Participants were asked to write some words of different languages in Roman script and were asked to think on what could be said on this basis. Taking into account the views of the attendees, Prof Agnihotri underlined the fact that script has nothing to do with language and all languages of the world could be written in one script. It was also shown that words in English and most Indian languages follow the structure of CVCV (C = consonant, V = vowel) and it was also suggested that approximately 98% languages of the world follow this structure. The participants also tried to examine the rules for

CCCV = i.e., the cluster of consonantal sounds that could appear in word initial position. They soon figured out that C1 could only be 's' and C2 = 'p, t or k' and C3 = 'y, r, l, w'.

Second day of the workshop started with the feedback of the participants. In it, attendees were asked to highlight their take on previous day's proceedings and what *new* they had learnt. In the first session, it was underlined that the science of language looks at - SAC i.e., Structure, Acquisition and Change. There is a certain structure of language, there is process of acquisition and on temporal basis there is change in it. The other thing figured prominently in the session was subtle evolution of 'R'. For example, 'R' of *mar* is without *swar* [vowel] but with *swar* in *ram* etc.

Prof. Agnihotri did not subscribe to the common notion of the people that there is linkage between one's ability to learn language and one's ability to hear/listen and speak it. Use of sign language is a testimony to this fact. He also opined that if government can afford availability of infrastructure to schools then a large number of physically challenged, deaf and dumb children could get access to education

In the post lunch session of the last day, he drew some universal rules on the basis of some sentences. After their responses, Prof Agnihotri outlined the rules regarding a) Person, Number and Gender (PNG) of Verb and b) rules regarding the agreement between verbs, subjects and objects.

On the last day of the workshop, it was firmly stated that the meaning of a word is not innately (by origin) linked to its form; it can vary with place. Structure of language is intricate and complex, and a child understands these complexities without any external help. Against the misconception of the participants, he reiterated the fact that existence of language is not possible without grammar and the latter does not contradict the former. There is no slavery in language and it knows no boundary.