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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Sarma, M. (1995/2021). *Axomiya Bhaxa Xikkhon Poddhoti* (অসমীয়া ভাষা শিক্ষণ পদ্ধতি) (*Methods of Teaching Assamese Language*). Students' Stores, ISBN: 81-86494-05-7**

*Reviewed by Barshapriya Dutta*

Madan Sarma examines the key themes in teaching Assamese as a mother tongue and a second language. The book is organized into the following twelve chapters

1. *Matribhaxa Xikhyonor Gurutta aaru Uddeshya* (The importance and aim of mother tongue education)
2. *Matribhaxar Xomolxomuh* (Mother tongue resources)
3. *Matribhaxa Xikhyonor Niti aru Poddhoti* (The Rules and Procedures of Acquiring Mother Tongue)
4. *Pathyakrom aru Pathyaputhi* (Syllabus and textbooks)
5. *Bhaxar Kouxol Xikkhyon Poddhoti* (Techniques of Language Learning: Listening, Speaking and Reading)
6. *Bhaxar Kouxol Xikkhyon Poddhoti:Likhon* (Techniques of Language Learning: Writing)
7. *Byakoron Xikhya* (Teaching of grammar)
8. *Xahitya Path* (Literature reading)
9. *Dwitiyo Bhaxa Hisape Axomiya Bhaxa Xikkyon* (Learning Assamese as a Second Language)
10. *Mulyayon* (Evaluation)
11. *Path Porikolpona* (Lesson plan)
12. Microteaching

Sarma bases his book on the syllabus of the BEd Programmes of the universities of Assam. The book discusses the theoretical and practical

concerns of language acquisition and learning and the evolution of Assamese.

The first three chapters deal with the Assamese mother tongue. It introduces the concept of mother tongue and its acquisition using Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device (LAD) and provides a historical overview of mother tongue curriculum since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second chapter provides a brief description of Assamese as an Indo-Aryan language and discusses the development of language and literature in three phases, namely,

- Ancient Era (from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> century)
- Middle Era (from the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the first three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century)
- Modern Era (From the 19<sup>th</sup> century till date)

The author classifies Assamese vocabulary, into five major groups: i) Sanskrit origin, ii) Native, iii) Non-Aryan origin, iv) Words from modern Indo-Aryan languages, and v) Foreign words. He concludes this chapter by providing an analysis of the language's phonological, morphological, and syntactic properties. Underlying the three chapters, the author makes the argument that while learning a mother tongue occurs naturally, it is vital to have the children learn it systematically in the formal setting of schools.

The next five chapters discuss teaching of Assamese in school. This includes the notion of curriculum and syllabus, teaching of reading and writing, grammar, and literature. In the chapter on curriculum, Sarma makes a significant claim that the curriculum depends on the country's political, social, and economic demands, its educational policies, and the most modern theories and ideas on teaching and learning. The fifth chapter deals with the development of speaking and reading skills in the elementary and the secondary stages of education. The sixth chapter claims that the objective of writing is to develop imaginative power and creativity in the students. The author suggests that strategies like dictation, writing answers for questions, short essays, summary writing, letter writing and so on are necessary for students to participate in writing. The author advocates that the inductive method of grammar teaching should be adopted in schools. Literature reading focuses on the need for incorporating literature in the curriculum. According to the author, literature is a valuable resource for reflecting society's socio-

cultural ideals and represents a variety of ways in which our native tongue is used. This chapter includes strategies that teachers can use to promote effective learning.

In the ninth chapter, Sarma points out that the aims of teaching Assamese to non-Assamese students should be kept separate from the goals of learning Assamese as a mother tongue. Consequently, the techniques will be completely different. During this procedure, the learners will acquire the Assamese sounds so that they will be able to distinguish them from the articulation of sounds they already know in their native tongue or any other language.

Evaluation, which forms the theme of the tenth chapter, is classified into comprehensive and continuous based on its nature. The examination, its types, and the nature of questions are detailed in this chapter. This chapter is valuable for it introduces the idea of blueprint; a chart that helps prepare the types of questions to be included in the examination. A blueprint makes the whole evaluation process systematic and transparent.

The eleventh chapter consists of a description of the lesson plan. The author encourages the use of lesson notes to use teaching-learning time effectively, since preparing the lesson plan is time-consuming. This chapter ends with a sample lesson note.

The final chapter focuses on microteaching, which allows teachers to assess their performance, get feedback on their competence, and increases their expertise as teachers. According to the author, microteaching reduces the duration of teaching and the size of the class. The circle of microteaching moves in six sequential orders: Plan, Teach, Feedback, Re-plan, Re-teach, and Re-Feedback.

The author provides seven microteaching formats:

- Knowledge of the lesson
- Questioning
- Instinctive response
- Writing on the board
- Explanation
- Demonstration
- Summarization of the lesson