

# Report

## Language Plus Programme:

### A Brief Report

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#### Introduction

Recent research has shown that the linguistic and cultural practices children bring from home should be used as a resource for their linguistic and cognitive growth. Unless the languages of learners are provided enough space in the classroom, they may become increasingly silent and indifferent to new knowledge. In the Language Plus Programme of Vidya Bhawan (VB) Education Resource Centre (ERC) started in July, 2017, it was decided to focus specially on English and Hindi without ignoring the languages learners bring from home. In addition to Hindi and English, the programme focused on overall linguistic, mathematical, social and cognitive growth of learners. It was decided to provide students the comfort and space where they can articulate their feelings and views freely and fearlessly. In the traditional classrooms, languages of home are dismissed as *bolis* or *dehati* and learners are discouraged from using them.

#### Implementation

This model involves a sustained attempt at teacher capacity building and enhancing the resources at VBS and particularly the ERC. The

process is cyclical: starting with workshop with teachers, sharing of activities and making plans, implementation of plans in the classroom, sharing of experiences from the previous plan in the following workshop. Most of the intervention, naturally, is grounded in the classroom; ideas and activities discussed in the Language Plus workshops are tried out by the teachers and ERC resource persons in the classrooms. Their feedback constitutes the backbone of the Saturday workshop sessions. The programme is evolving through a dialogic relationship among the teachers, resource persons and students/children of Nursery and Primary. In the process of learning, nothing motivates a child more than the feeling that she can fearlessly say what she wishes, without any fear of ridicule. It is hoped that as teachers and students progress in this model, they will become fluent not only in basic skills in the two languages but would also be able to negotiate serious discourse in the content areas. The experiment is a classic case of taking theory to the classroom and refining theorizing from practices in the classrooms.

#### Sessions so far

The programme has been running for 10 months in class 1 of all the three VB schools. The teachers of class 1 along with other interested teachers were invited for initiating the programme. School wise participants are follows:

Table 2

Participants in the programme

S. No	Name of School	No. of teachers	No. of children	Total working days of School	Classes taken by ERC
1	VB Junior School	2	26	223	From July onwards, 9 periods of 40 minutes each in a week (estimated time= 9 periods*35 weeks*40 minutes = 210 hours)
2	VB Public School	4	20	208	From November 27 <sup>th</sup> onwards, 6 periods of 40 minutes each in a week (estimated time = 27 days*2 periods*40 minutes = 36 hours)
3	VB Basic School	4	13	214	From November 27 <sup>th</sup> onwards, 10 periods of 40 minutes each in a week (estimated time = 37 days*2 periods*40 minutes = 50 hours)

The Language Plus workshops are often joined by several nursery school teachers and ERC members and the strength in any given workshop may vary between 20 and 25. A total of 21 workshops have been held during July 2017 to April 2018. The atmosphere in these meetings is generally very informal and a lot of effort is put into listening patiently to the experiences of teachers in the classrooms. The focus areas include: nature of language and mathematics teaching, the medium of learning, process of language and mathematics learning, teaching strategies, conceptual understanding and pedagogical process of language and mathematics and sharing of classroom experiences. In these workshops we also share and discuss some relevant readings. During Oct 9 and 11, 2017, a conceptual understanding workshop focusing on language and mathematics and the learning process was held.

### Outcomes

The outcomes of this experiment have really been encouraging. In particular, we may point to the following:

- *Teachers have started appreciating the potential learners bring to school as well as their linguistic and mathematical knowledge.*
- *Learners are beginning to shed their inhibitions and given the fact that they can speak fearlessly in any language has helped us all in breaking several barriers.*
- *The evidence of classes being interactive and children trying to learn through peer group activities was evident through some videos that were discussed in the workshops.*
- *Teachers would often bring to the workshops the outstanding work done by their students, often looking surprised at what they had been able to achieve in the domains of language (see for example*

*the section on lexical flowering) and mathematics.*

- *Constant and rigorous reflection on the implementation of certain theoretical ideas and corresponding activities in the classroom brought a certain kind of unprecedented seriousness to the teaching-learning process; teachers realised that could play an active role in designing their lesson and transacting them in the classroom.*

### Periodic assessments

Three different assessments were done during and after the intervention (before the school closed for holidays):

- **December, 2017** (5 months after the intervention): Focus on expression, reading and writing, creativity and oral skills in mathematics
- **February, 2018** (7 months after the intervention): Multilingual lexical development
- **April 2018** (9 months after the intervention): Comprehensive test based on MHRD indicators

The initial results of reading and writing skills in Hindi and English were promising. The number of children who could read unfamiliar Hindi texts with comprehension rose from 28% to 54% and those who could do the same with unfamiliar English texts rose from 4% to 20%. In the case of writing, the number of children who could spell accurately and read what they had written rose from 29% to 64% in Hindi and from 2% to 34% in English.

### Lexical Flowering

A comprehensive assessment based on MHRD indicators and on reading, writing and creativity is being prepared. In this short report, we present a brief analysis of lexical development in multiple languages and scripts.

The following activity was discussed in one of the workshops to appreciate the lexical enrichment of children during this programme. For a pilot, teachers tried out a single picture of an animal and asked children to write as many words as they could in any language using any script. The results were promising. A sheet with the following three pictures was then prepared: 'a dog, a bed and a tree'. A total of 45 children of Class 1 participated in the experiment. The total number of words produced by them in Hindi, English, various languages of Rajasthan such as Mewari, Bagri etc. and some fascinating nonce words was 660 (see Table 1, each picture shows a number close to 200 words) an average of say 15 words per picture. As Table 1 shows, 38 children out of 45 (above 84%) wrote more than 11 words for the 3 pictures, an average of 4 words per picture. Table 2 shows the great advantages of using multilingualism as a classroom resource not just because of the number of languages and scripts used or for the number of Hindi and English words that have been internalised but because of the nonce words (Others) invented by children and creative expressions used by them. The space that such an activity provides for the free play of the imagination and fantasy of children and the practice they gain in using script and internalizing the complex relationships that obtain between the spoken and the written language is immense. Consider some words and expressions used for 'bed', for example:

- सोने का बिसतर / सोने का वीसतर / सोने का मासा / मेरा पलंग
- माचा / माचो माजो / माजे / माजा / माछा
- माछो / मासो / मासडो / खटली / खटडि / खाठलो / गटीया / खदीया / इडा
- मसे / माकडा / मासला / मास / मालार / गडीसी / लेटनी / लेटनि
- Bed/bed/BED/BeD/Bat/bat/ beb/bad/ mat

Table 1  
Category of children on the basis of number of words written

Words of different languages written for 'dog, bed and tree'		
S. No	Number of Words written	No of children
1	15 to 18	29
2	11 to 14	9
3	7 to 10	3
4	3 to 6	3
5	less than 3	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>45</b>

Table 2  
Total number of words in different languages written by all the learners

Words written for 'dog, bed and tree'						
S. No	Object	Words written in different languages				Total
		Hindi	Languages of Rajasthan	English	Others	
1	Dog	108	59	57	5	229
2	Bed	91	76	19	11	197
3	Tree	164	24	37	9	234
4	Total no. of words	363	159	113	25	660

Lexical responses to the picture of a dog in multiple languages and scripts



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