

When I was in class III, I remember the teacher used to give a list of opposite words telling us their meanings and asking us to memorize all the words. The next day, she would ask whether the students had learnt or not. I recall how difficult it was to learn the words without having any example or image in mind. So, I would like to share one of my classroom experiences in dealing with this topic of opposites. I want to point out that children can learn a language other than their first language or mother tongue even if they have not had the opportunity to learn it earlier. Every child has the capacity to learn if we, the teachers, use their existing knowledge for the new learning.

For example, I was teaching the topic *Opposites* to class II. I started the class by asking 'What do you mean by opposites?' The children said they did not know. I gave an example of *big* and *small* by showing a picture of an elephant and a mouse. I asked them if they looked the same size. The children said, 'No, elephant *bada hai aur* mouse *chota*.'

I said 'Yes, elephant is bada, big and the mouse is chota, or small. Can you tell me some other big and small things you know? They said cow - dog, dog - cat, horse - dog, etc.

I then explained tall and short with a picture of a coconut tree and a rose bush and asked the children to give some more examples from their experience. The children, then, went on to identify their tall and short classmates and teachers to understand the concepts of tall and short.

When I entered the class the next day, the children gave many other examples of big-small and tall-short, such as father and mother, teacher and I, for tall and short; and room and doll, school building and toys for big-small. I realised that the words I had told them yesterday made them think about finding more such examples. We continued with *hard* and *soft* (cotton and wood). The children came, touched the cotton and said, soft means *Mulayam*. Then the children came up with many examples such as chalk and duster. They said, 'duster is hard; chalk is soft.'

We continued this activity in smaller groups and my observation is that even the children who were usually not active in class seemed to be excited to put down their words on the given sheet and try hard to give their best. Excellent examples came from them. It also made the children's understanding of the concept so strong that it remained in their memory.

Those children are now in class III and they still remember the opposites so well that whenever I ask them, they give correct answers without having to think.

So, I feel that whichever topic we are dealing with, especially topics for which conceptual understanding is required, we should involve the students so that they take deep interest and 'mugging' stops but a deeper understanding of concepts follows.



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