

USING FOLKTALES OF THE BUGUN TRIBE AS TEXTBOOK LESSONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO THE PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF THE SAME TRIBE

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ABSTRACT

The Bugun Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh has a rich treasure of folk literature. Students coming from the tribe and learning English as a language subject have been found to be facing problems, where their Textbook Lessons do not bear much correspondence to their tribal contexts. In this paper, a textbook lesson has been prepared for the Class-IV students with folktales from their tribe. It has been seen that such a lesson proves helpful in ensuring their English language skills development.

KEYWORDS: Folktales, Bugun Tribe, Textbook, English Language Teaching

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

Students coming from different tribes in Arunachal Pradesh take interest in learning English as a school subject. Their textbook lessons in use at the primary school level contain lessons that do not bear much correspondence to their tribal contexts. This situation poses some problem for language skills development because other than carrying the content load, they have to make use of vocabulary and English language grammar. To ease this situation, folktales of the tribes translated into English have been used as potential textbook lessons with of course the goal of language skills development maintained there as a key priority. A folktale from the Bugun tribe of the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh has been developed into a textbook lesson in this paper. The textbook preparation guiding principles prescribed by Jack Richards and by NCERT have largely been followed in the effort to develop the said folktale-based textbook lesson.

Arunachal Pradesh¹ is known as the land of the rising sun and also as the land of dawn-lit mountains. It is a hill state with rich natural beauty and a wide variety of orchids. Hornbill is the state bird and mithun² (*Bos frontalis*) is the state animal. The people of this state are courteous and hospitable and this makes the state an important tourist destination in the North East India. The state was previously known as NEFA and on 20th of February 1987 Arunachal Pradesh gained the status of a full-fledged state. Itanagar is the capital of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Home to 26 major tribes, there are many subtribes inhabiting this state. Every tribe has its own Mother language. Most of these languages have no script. Recent efforts by the elite societies in some tribes have earned success in developing for their respective languages certain scripts. In order to tide over the language problem, the state official language has been English. The medium of education at all levels is also English.

The district of West Kameng has its headquarters in Bomdila. There are six tribes inhabiting in this district. They are, alphabetically, Aka, Bugun, Monpa, Sajolang (Miji), Sartang and Sherdukpen. All these tribes have their unique folktales and folksongs. Primary school students coming from these tribes find English language as a teaching subject heavy because of unknown contexts that form the textbook lessons in their Marigold textbooks. The insights and instructions of NCERT going into the making of these textbooks makes them scientific as language teaching-learning tools. However, the national body leaves room for appropriately incorporating locally important and constitutionally valid considerations to make textbooks the right and effective means to let learning outcome occur across social and cultural contexts. The NCERT by entering into the research and practice in the field and by taking appropriate note of the government policies in place to ensure the reach of education to all sections of the society while specially being awake to the needs of the traditionally disadvantaged people works to offer textbooks that still are encouraged to cater to local needs expressed in terms of people's valuable culture. The model that NCERT offers is hence inherently enriched with concerns and recommendations of committees and commissions on education that have an eye on national priorities and future needs evaluated against international best practices.

The National Curriculum Framework Level³(NCF 2005) has provided the goals for second language curriculum are twofold:(a) Attainment of a basic proficiency such as is required in natural language learning; and (b) The development of language in to an instrument for abstract thought.

The NCERT Expectations Regarding English Teaching: As far as English teaching is concerned as a subject in language education at the Primary school level, the NCERT expectations are very clear.

Objectives of Teaching English at Elementary Level⁴: According to Dutta et al(2012), Skill based subject of English language, at the Elementary level should have the objective of teaching English to develop all the four fundamental skills among them i.e.-LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing).Familiarizing the child with the spoken language is necessary by exposing them to the language in meaningful, interesting and real life situations through the mother tongue, signs, visuals, pictures, sketches, gestures, letters, words, single word questions and answers. Slowly, the students should be enabled to read and write, besides listening and speaking. (https://ncert.nic.in/del/pdf/English_Primary_level.pdf)

The broad prescription is on Reading strategies, Writing strategies, Vocabulary, and Grammar and mechanics. Also, emphasis is on the Listening Activity, and the Speaking Activity (Discussion). MCQ has been additionally given to ensure that students are able to answer the questions by referring to the choices given and by consulting the lesson if necessary. Reading strategies have been elaborated to cover the following: Main idea, Theme, Author's purpose, Text structure, Sensory details, literary devices, Point of view, Inference, Story elements, Visual elements. Similarly, Writing strategies have been elaborated to cover the following: Organising writing, Introductions and conclusions, Linking words, Developing and supporting arguments, Descriptive details. Vocabulary development covers Prefixes and suffixes, Compound words, Synonyms and antonyms, and Dictionary Reference skills.Grammar and mechanics part covers Sentences, fragments and run-ons, Nouns, Pronouns, Verb types, Subject-verb agreement, Verb tense, Articles, Adjectives and adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions, Contractions, Commas, Capitalisation, and Formatting.

Further, for development of Listening skills Listening Activity has been given with provision to make students answer the questions on 1. Dictation of words; 2. Dictation of phrases; and 3. Dictation of sentences. Similar emphasis on development of Speaking skills has been given with provision for Speaking Activity (Discussion) to make students answer

the questions on using Role-play for parts of the story where students will act out the role of different characters in conversation. The exercise would help them enjoy speaking English in those Role-plays. Also, students will tell where in the story there are examples to support the claim that the bat is more intelligent than the monkey.

There is an MCQ section intended to hold the students' interest in the present text-book lesson-unit. In order to confirm the answers, they would always be interested to go back to the story and locate the conversations and the Speaker and the Addressee. Besides, this exercise would bring the students' attention to the form in which with various punctuation marks the texts extracted are appearing in different parts of the story. One very significant contribution this voluntary return to the text-book lesson-unit would make is that in trying to locate the cited parts, the students would naturally come upon other parts of the text thereby developing greater hold over the sentence structures, words and phrases.

Quality Textbooks help develop students' ability to learn through reading. The amount and quality of the texts to be included therefore deserve greater attention. Other desirable features of a good textbook include interactivity, the ability to arouse the interest of students, and the capacity to actively engage and involve them in the learning process. In other words, good textbooks tell, involve and interact with students⁵. (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/resource-support/textbook-info/GuidingPrinciples/index.html>)

How to Use Textbooks is an important question and the following considerations are important in this context⁶: Using the textbook as a resource for students, but not the only resource; Using a textbook as a guide, not a mandate, for instruction. Using freedom to modify, change, eliminate, or add to the material in the textbook. Supplementing the textbook with lots of outside readings. Supplementing teacher information in the textbook with teacher resource books; and conversations with experienced teachers. (<https://www.teachervision.com/curriculum-planning/textbooks-advantages-disadvantages>)

Professor Jack C. Richards has suggested the following to identify the following kinds of information in the qualities of a good textbook⁷:

- Aims and objectives of the book.
- Level of the book.
- Skills addressed.
- Topics covered.
- Situations it is intended for.
- Target learners.
- Time required.
- Components.
- Number and length of units.
- Organization of units.

(<https://www.brightclassroomideas.com/good-textbook-characteristics/>)

Developing a Textbook-Worthy Lesson with a BUGUN Folktale: An exercise on developing a textbook-worthy lesson with a BUGUN folktale - Why Monkeys Look How They Look -is executed here in this paper. The considerations of motivation, interest, voluntary participation in doing the text by the students themselves without a potentially alienating sense of burden being high in our mind as a need to make the text-book lesson effective for all practical purposes, in this paper a textbook lesson has been prepared for the Class-IV students with folktales from the BUGUN tribe. It has been tried out in the actual class-room and it is seen that it proves helpful in ensuring their English language skills development.

The BUGUN People: As discussed above, the Bugun tribe is considered traditionally to have been settled in the West Kameng district. The Singchungarea, Wango village, Tenga valley, New Kaspi and Bichhom are places where the people of this tribe are found. Rich in tradition and customs, the tribe has some very good knowledgeable elders who can be considered to have the ability to narrate their folktales. These elders are also keen about the possible increase in the value of their folktales if the same in the translated form could be taught the tribe's children in their Primary school classes for development of their English language skills. Besides this, they are also aware that the tribe's folk wisdom as contained in the folktales of the tribe can be preserved if children come to read and understand them in formal classroom teaching conditions and thus are in a position to appreciate their tribe and their surroundings better with the living and non-living entities that add to the charm of existing as a community.

The BUGUN Folktale (for Class- IV): Why Monkeys Look How They Look

A long time ago, the monkey was known for its mischievousness. The monkey had a really long tail that it was very proud of. It used to play tricks on everyone in the jungle. Therefore, there were many animals that were looking to teach it a lesson.

One day, a bat was sitting by the riverside catching fish. A monkey saw that and was amazed by the amount of fish it had caught. So it asked, "Dear friend, you have caught so many fishes. How did you manage to do that?"

The bat thought that this was its chance to finally teach it a lesson. It said, "It's very simple my friend. All you have to do is hold on to a branch of the tree by the riverside. I will help you dip in your tail in the river. When the fish bites on your tail, you will feel that and you just have to pull it out."

The monkey fell in the trap. It caught hold of a branch and offered its tail to the bat.

The bat, very cleverly, tied a huge stone to its tail and threw it as far as it could into the river and flew away. When the stone tugged at its tail, it thought that a fish was caught and pulled at its tail. But the monkey was stuck. It tried pulling and pulling. The day was already ending but it could not free its tail. At the end, half of its tail fell off and it is said that that is the reason monkeys have short tail today.

The monkey was very upset and decided that it would take its revenge on the bat. While the monkey was on a look out for a chance, it stumbled upon the same bat sitting on a very tall bamboo with sharp shoots. The monkey thought that here was the chance it had been looking for and asked, "What are you doing up there, friend?"

The bat realized it had another chance to make a fool of the monkey and replied, "Oh, don't you know? On top of this tall bamboo sits the great Rinpoche. He has asked me to guard this bamboo so that no one eats it. So, I am diligently looking after it."

The monkey was a greedy fellow. It thought that since the Rinpoche himself had asked the bat to guard the bamboo so there must be something special about it. So, it begged to the bat, “Please let me just have a bite, won’t you?” But the bat refused.

The monkey insisted and so the bat said to it, “Okay if you insist, I will go up and ask the Rinpoche if you can have a bite. If he says yes, I will whistle and you eat as much as you can.”

The bat flew as high as it could and then whistled. The stupid monkey immediately started to gobble up as fast as it could. Now it is said that monkeys had small mouth in the beginning but as it started gobbling up the bamboo, the sharp shoots cut into its mouth and that is how the monkeys got wide mouth.

The monkey realized it had been fooled again and vowed to take revenge the next time.

After a few days, the monkey ran into the bat again as it was sitting on a beehive. Curious, the monkey asked, “What are you doing up there, my friend?”

The bat once again decided to trick the monkey. It said, “Oh this is a drum of the great Rinpoche. He has asked me to guard it so no one beats his drum. I am just doing my duty.”

The curious monkey couldn’t help itself. It requested the bat again and again to let it hit the drum just once.

The bat said to the monkey, “Okay, since you insist, I will ask the Rinpoche so that you can hit the drum once. As soon as I get the permission I will whistle. Then you can hit the drum.”

The bat once again flew as high as it could and whistled. The stupid monkey once again fell into the trap and hit the beehive with all its might.

Disturbed by the commotion, the angry bees bit the monkey all over its body. It is said that that is how the monkey got its swollen face.

I. Reading Strategies

- **Main Idea:** Curiosity at times brings in troubles.
- **Theme:** The monkey came to suffer only because he showed curiosity for everything. Blind belief in others becomes the cause of the monkey’s suffering.
- **Author's Purpose:** The purpose of this folktale is to advise and warn readers/listeners about the bad results of unnecessary curiosity and blind belief in others in a foolish and simple way.
- **Story Elements:** The story has the monkey, the bat and other creatures as characters. Their experiences and conversations and activities make the body of this folktale/story.
- **Visual Elements:** The interesting folktale teaches a good lesson – always to be careful and to think before doing things. The students are able to imagine all the scenes of action as the characters are all drawn from their surroundings.

Exercise

- What is the theme of this story?
- What is the purpose of telling/reading this story?
- List all the characters of the story in the order of their importance.
- List the actions of the story in the order of their occurrence.

Comprehension Questions

Why did the Animals think of Teaching the Monkey a Lesson?

If students are not able to give the answer, let them read the following extract from the story for help: Long time ago, monkey was known for its mischievousness. The monkey had a really long tail that it was very proud of. It used to play tricks on everyone in the jungle. Therefore, there were many animals that were looking to teach it a lesson.

What did the Monkey want to know from the Bat Catching Fish on the River Bank?

If students are not able to give the answer, let them read the following extract from the story for help: One day, a bat was sitting by the riverside catching fish. A monkey saw that and was amazed by the amount of fish it had caught. So it asked, “Dear friend, you have caught so many fishes. How did you manage to do that?”

Where did Part of the Monkey’s Tail go Making it Short?

If students are not able to give the answer, let them read the following extract from the story for help: The bat thought that this was its chance to finally teach it a lesson. It said, “It’s very simple my friend. All you have to do is hold on to a branch of the tree by the riverside. I will help you dip in your tail in the river. When the fish bites on your tail, you will feel that and you just have to pull it out.”

The monkey fell in the trap. It caught hold of a branch and offered its tail to the bat.

The bat, very cleverly, tied a huge stone to its tail and threw it as far as it could into the river and flew away. When the stone tugged at its tail, it thought that a fish was caught and pulled at its tail. But the monkey was stuck. It tried pulling and pulling. The day was already ending but it could not free its tail. At the end, half of its tail fell off and it is said that that is the reason monkeys have short tail today.]

How did the Monkey get its Mouth Wide and Large?

If students are not able to give the answer, let them read the following extract from the story for help: The monkey insisted so the bat said to it, “Okay if you insist, I will go up and ask the Rinpoche if you can have a bite. If he says yes, I will whistle and you eat as much as you can.”

The bat flew as high as it could and then whistled. The stupid monkey immediately started to gobble up as fast as it could. Now it is said that monkeys had small mouth in the beginning but as it started gobbling up the bamboo, the sharp shoots cut into its mouth and that is how the monkeys got wide mouth.]

How did the Monkey get its Swollen Face?

If students are not able to give the answer, let them read the following extract from the story for help: The bat once again flew as high as it could and whistled. The stupid monkey once again fell into the trap and hit the beehive with all its might.

Disturbed by the commotion, the angry bees bit the monkey all over its body. It is said that that is how the monkey got its swollen face.]

Writing Strategies

Exercise

- Follow the way the story has passed from the introduction to the conclusion. (By closely doing this exercise, students would be trained in arranging and ordering events in a logical way. Development of creativity would be possible in this way. By seeing the cause-effect link, students would also get scope for development of critical thinking)
- Reproduce the Introduction section.
- Reproduce the ending section.
- Make a summary of the folktale.
- Choose parts of the story where there is any conversation. Reproduce the same parts.
- Summarise the conversations and link them to later effects. Show how the story comes to grow further as a result of those conversations and their effects.
- Compare the characters giving comment on what they do.

Vocabulary

Exercise

- Prefixes and suffixes: Mischievousness, really, diligently, greedy
- Synonyms: diligently, greedy, upset, trick
- Antonyms: proud, sharp, replied, refused, special,
- Reference skills: revenge, commotion, stumbled, guard, realized,

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Let students answer all the questions in this section with words and sentences taken exactly from the lesson. The use of this way of answering is in the fact that students will be able to self-check the answers by locating the exact extracts from the text and thus to gain a confirmed acquaintance with features of the extract in terms of sentence-syntax and words in use.

Exercise

Read the following sentences and give similar sentences by changing the relevant words used in the sentences as subject or object. Take new words and replace the ones that are already there:

- The monkey was very upset and decided that it would take its revenge on the bat.
- The monkey realized it had been fooled again and vowed to take revenge the next time.
- The monkey requested the bat again and again to let it hit the drum just once.
- Disturbed by the commotion, the angry bees bit the monkey all over its body.

LISTENING ACTIVITY

Directions: Students are to answer the following questions

- Dictation of words.(The teacher would find out from the lesson that he/she would consider appropriate to ask in this case to determine the students are listening properly, getting the words with their constituent sounds properly and writing the answers correctly.)
- Dictation of phrases.(The teacher would find out from the lesson that he/she would consider appropriate to ask in this case to determine the students are listening properly, getting the words as constituent parts properly as per the phrases selected and writing the answers correctly.)
- Dictation of sentences.(The teacher would find out from the lesson that he/she would consider appropriate to ask in this case to determine the students are listening properly, getting the words as constituent parts properly as per the sentences selected and writing the answers correctly.)

SPEAKING ACTIVITY (DISCUSSION)

Directions: Students are to answer the following questions:

- Use Role-play for parts of the story. Let students act out the role of different characters in conversation. Let them enjoy speaking English in those Role-plays.
- Do you think that the bat is more intelligent than the monkey? If yes, tell where in the story there are examples to support your understanding.

MCQ

Directions: Students are to answer the following questions. When one does not remember the story parts, students are free to consult the story as a whole and find out where a particular dialogue as given in the questions below is there. That way they will come to discover how the text/lesson can be confidently used to clarify every doubt or question asked involving different characters.

“Dear friend, you have caught so many fishes. How did you manage to do that?” -Who is the speaker?

- The monkey
- The bat
- Rinpoche
- The fish

“Oh this is a drum of the great Rinpoche. He has asked me to guard it so no one beats his drum. I am just doing my duty.” - Who is the speaker?

- The monkey
- The bat
- Rinpoche
- The fish

“Okay if you insist, I will go up and ask the Rinpoche if you can have a bite. If he says yes, I will whistle and you eat as much as you can.” -Who is the speaker?

- The monkey
- The bat
- Rinpoche
- The fish

“Oh no no my friend. That is just not possible. The Rinpoche would get mad and I will be punished.” -Who is the speaker?

- The monkey
- The bat
- Rinpoche
- The fish

“Okay, since you insist, I will ask the Rinpoche so that you can hit the drum once. As soon as I get the permission I will whistle. Then you can hit the drum.” -Who is the speaker?

- The monkey
- The bat
- Rinpoche
- The fish

CONCLUSIONS

Lessons like the present example seem to be very effective. The folktale from their tribe as above brings their known world of objects and people from their regular surroundings to actively make the lesson developed an enjoyable and highly engaging learning material for the Bugun tribe children at their Primary school Class-IV level.

NOTE

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