

## Impressions of the workshop on 14 July 2023

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The Language Enrichment Program in English organised by the District Institute of Education and Training (Bengaluru North DIET) in association with IT for Change was a one-day event held on 14 July 2023, Friday. The venue was Shree Siddaganga High School in Basaveshwar Nagar, Bengaluru.

I rode from Shanthinagar and reached the school around 9:30 AM, thanks to google maps. A man with three horizontal lines on his forehead asked me at the gate what I had come for. I spoke in English and he asked me if I didn't know Kannada. I got a sense of my ignorance and explained in Hindi and he let me in. The assembly was in progress in the school and stood still listening to the Karnataka state anthem and the national anthem. Arjun from ITfC was there even before me; so I chatted with him for a bit about the workshop and the organisation itself. We walked to the venue and as we climbed the stairs, I saw the pictures of many great leaders and was struck by the three horizontal lines on the forehead of the honourable Dr B.R. Ambedkar. I consoled my mildly shocked self by thinking that this was just a way of showing respect for him. When we reached the venue, some of the participants had already arrived and we waited a bit more till all the teachers, the ITfC members and the executives of Bangalore North DIET arrived.

The workshop started with a few speeches and prayers (in Kannada and English). In Guru's short and interesting introduction to language and language learning, he spoke about the non-intentional aspects of learning. A conscious effort on the part of the teachers to reduce the stress, including decreasing the importance of the examination-orientation, is necessary for learning, he pointed out

The next session was on the use of stories in teaching various subjects -- languages, science, mathematics, etc. This session was led by Reha, who spoke about how stories facilitate the teaching of various subjects. There was an interesting story about how a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. The teachers actively spoke about how this story could be connected to ideas in biology, physics, mathematics and eating habits in contemporary societies.

This was followed by a session led by Nafeeza on the use of the Kiwix App, which was built to help teachers and students engage with stories. I think the teachers took some time to get used to this (so did I).

In between this, the BEO came in and spoke for a bit. It was in almost uncorrupted Kannada, which again reminded me of my ignorance. I observed that when people who learnt Kannada as a second language spoke, I could understand much more. If your first language is Kannada, you would be speaking much faster and your vocabulary would be much richer than how it would be for someone who learnt Kannada as a second language.

We had a simple lunch, a mix of rice bath and curd rice. At the beginning of the post-lunch session, Guru recalled how his language learning was supported by the access to a good library. He made us see that what the Kiwix app did, with its presentation of stories in multiple forms -- visual, auditory and text -- was to give the learners rich language input. \

The teachers then were divided into different groups and they worked with the stories in the Kiwix library. Each team selected one story and connected that to a lesson in the English textbook that they are teaching and discussed activities for the students. I sat with a group and they connected the story 'Diving' with a lesson about the mountaineer Bachendri Pal. One was about the adventure of going up and the other was about going deep down. The teachers discussed these connections and came up with activities for their students. It would have been better, I felt, if some groups had thought a bit more rather than rely too much on the instructions in the handout given.

In her concluding remarks, one of the officials of DIET, Dr Padmashree spoke about how a student in Kasaragod, named Mohammed, made great progress in language learning using the presentation of stories aided by technology. I was touched by a message hidden within this. It was that learning recognizes no boundaries of caste and religion; what we need is the sense that we are all in this together and the best we can do is to support each other.