

The art and craft of teaching

By B Krishna Mohan

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NOT many will debate the point that the usage of English, both by academic and professional communities, is on the rise. And a close examination of the language teaching and learning systems at the school level will reveal that there are some lacunae.

If some feel that the content is not relevant others put the blame on the inadequate preparation of the teacher in meeting today's classroom demands for the poor quality of teaching.

Spark-India, a company formed by a few enterprising teachers, is bringing out 'The Art and Craft of Teaching', a set of training videos for language teachers and teacher-trainers, a geography reference-cum-text for children aged between 7 and 9 and a Big Book - large format illustrated story book for shared reading that pre-primary and primary teachers can use in groups.

The books and the video will formally be launched tomorrow.

"We are at a disadvantage as we do not have a strong foundation in the dominant language," says Lakshmi Rameshwar Rao, one of the partners in Spark-India and a teacher and a book-seller for over 25 years. Most teachers do not have an access to supplementary texts which might enhance their learning, particularly in social studies and science subjects, she says.

"Many school teachers do not have

enough proficiency in English to disseminate it effectively to pupils. As a result, the children coming out of such schools are not fluent language users and therefore are not confident to express their ideas," she says narrating her experience.

The videos are a series of simulations to focus on four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW).

Spark Junior Geography, a reference book for elementary social studies, uses simple and colourful illustrations with annotated text. The glossary and index of the book will incite the child to develop reference material, says Lakshmi.

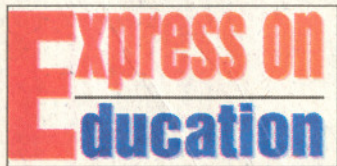
"What children listen will form the substance of what they speak. The objective of a classroom exercise should be to make the children listen, learn and express themselves in the language," she says, adding

that children at pre-primary level listen without being self-conscious and respond to what they have heard. "Children will learn to imitate," she says.

The natural instinct of children to draw can be put to use to teach letters, she feels. Classroom exercises must be designed to develop sound reading and writing skills among pre-primary school students, Lakshmi adds.

The video, available in a CD format also, includes a simulation on word order games and an exercise on tenses.

Further details can be obtained at the Spark-India office at Sudershan, near United Insurance Building, Himayatnagar.

The logo for 'Express on Education' features the word 'Express' in red, 'on' in blue, and 'Education' in blue, all in a bold, sans-serif font. The text is contained within a thin black rectangular border.