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## Reportage

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# Srijan I : Reflections of Teachers in an Orientation Programme

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***Languages flourish in each others' company***— today this is a proven reality. When we look back we find that some languages were considered more precious than others. The reason being, that these languages were associated with socio-political and economic power. While this can be traced to colonial times, the phenomenon continued till recent times. As a result barriers were created between Hindi and English, or other regional languages and English.

In fact all languages as abstract systems or subsystems are equal. The science of language studies treats all language systems equally. And the myth that one language is superior to the other has been dispelled now. India is a multi-lingual country and thanks to our vibrant linguistic plurality, most of us are at least bilingual. Several studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between bilingualism and cognitive growth and scholastic achievements. Another important aspect is that the curriculum needs to transcend borders not only with other subjects but among different languages

as well. This will help in creating space for more number of options at the senior secondary level that have the potential for encouraging creativity and interdisciplinary understanding among learners. 'Creative writing and Translation' is one such course that can provide this opportunity to young minds.

*Srijan-I*, a course in creative writing and translation is a significant step towards bridging the gap between languages and dissolving linguistic barriers that limit free flow and exchange of thoughts and ideas. It is for the first time that the National Council of Educational Research and Training has developed a bilingual book in Hindi and English. The content of the book comprises parallel texts and not exact translations. The innovative design of this textbook has been developed to inspire both teachers and students to combine knowledge of language and literature in both the languages along with contemporary social realities and discourses associated with them.

Such an initiative can succeed only if school principals, teachers and

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parents recognise the significance of the course. Taking cognizance of this fact, the Department of Languages organised an orientation programme for principals, teacher-educators and teachers from 17 to 19 June, 2009 at NCERT, New Delhi. Teachers (PGT and TGT) of both Hindi and English were invited to attend the orientation programme. The programme comprised sessions dedicated to each unit of the book.

On the first day, teachers were inquisitive, anxious and at the same time apprehensive about a bilingual course. The non-hierarchical structure of the workshop however put all the participants at ease. The teachers said that they found the interactions fruitful and gradually their apprehension and anxiety were replaced by interest and curiosity about transacting the course.

In line with the spirit of the book, the workshop too encouraged participation and creative ideation. Feedback in the form of a short presentation on the textbook by each of the participants provided an insight into areas for further development in training as well as exhibited their new found understanding. This not only gave direction to the orientation programme but also revealed the teachers' enthusiasm about the new and challenging course. During the orientation programme the participants were asked to review the book. One of the participant's reviews is given below.

The teachers appreciated the fact that creativity is not inborn only in some people, in fact everyone is creative and children are more so. They were positive and convinced that what students need is their guidance so that the students'

creative energy gets direction as they have the desire and requisite capability. They also felt that *Srijan-I* would encourage a constant dialogue between them and the students.

During the group activity session the teachers themselves did the activities given at the end of the book and opined that through activities the link between both the languages was further established. During discussions on translation as a creative activity, teachers shared examples of how translation is not just a literary activity but is also a skill. Since languages form culture and vice-versa, translation is an important faculty in a multilingual country like ours.

The session on assessment reaffirmed that assessment should not be merely in terms of marks or grades. Constructive feedback from the teachers would be more effective. This should be combined with teachers' observations and the assessment of students' work throughout the year through portfolios, oral presentations, group-work, students' self-assessment etc. thereby bringing together the teachers' agency and the students' agency.

The workshop closed with a brainstorming session where all concerned shared their plans about introducing the course and also worked out ways and means to work together and learn from each others' insights and creativity. Clouds of anxiety were now dispelled and a new dawn of creative possibilities shone. We are now hopeful that languages and subjects will transcend boundaries and become more porous and give opportunities to learners to express themselves creatively.