



Using Folktales Of The Monpa Tribe As Primary School Textbook Lessons For Class-Iii English Language Teaching To Students Of The Same Tribe

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[Abstract: The Monpa 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 when their Textbook lessons do not bear much correspondence to their tribal contexts. In this paper a textbook lesson has been prepared for the Class-III 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, Monpa Tribe, Arunachal Pradesh ,Textbook, Teaching Primary school English]

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, students are required to master vocabulary and English language grammar. To ease this situation, language skills development goal maintained as a key priority for teaching English as a subject in language education at the Primary school level, the NCERT expectations in the present exercise on developing a textbook-worthy lesson with a Monpa folktale have been followed in spirit 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 have guided the said folktale-based text-book lesson preparation for the Class-III students and in the actual class-room it has been seen that the effort is by and large successful in meeting the needs of the language class while giving the students a sense of satisfaction that the content matter relates to much of what is there in their surroundings and tradition and social experience.

Known as the land of the rising sun and also as the land of dawn-lit mountains and previously referred to as NEFA, **Arunachal Pradesh**¹ gained the status of a full-fledged state on 20th of February 1987. Itanagar is the capital of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Home to 26 major tribes, there are many subtribes inhabiting this state. A hill state with rich natural beauty and a wide variety of orchids, the state is an important tourist destination in the North East India with its courteous and hospitable people. Hornbill is

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the state bird and mithun (*Bos frontalis*) is the state animal. Every tribe in the state has its own Mother language though recent efforts by the elite societies in some of the tribes have earned success in developing script for their respective languages. To get over the language problem, the state has made English its official language and the medium of education at all levels is also English.

There are six tribes inhabiting in the district of **West Kameng**². They are, alphabetically, Aka (Hrusso), Bugun (Khawas), Monpa , Sajolang(Miji), Sartang and Sherdukpen. The district headquarters happens to be in Bomdila , a cold location because of its high altitude location. Bomdila is located at 27.25°N 92.4°E. It has an average elevation of 2217 metres (7273 feet). It is 109 km from Bhalukpong . All the tribes in the district have their unique folktales and folksongs. Primary school textbook lessons in their Marigold textbooks without contexts known to the tribal locations and their traditional rural life find the students coming from these tribes struggling to come to terms with English language as a teaching subject . Though the insights and instructions of NCERT³ go to make these textbooks scientific as language teaching-learning tools on all counts, the NCERT as a national body takes 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 and works to offer textbooks that still are encouraged to accommodate local needs.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is a government organization meant to ensure the qualitative improvement in school education in India. In a bid to building a common education system, NCERT has been developing and publishing the NCERT textbooks for Classes 1 to 12 with also educational kits and multimedia digital materials to help students with their studies. The NCERT in consonance with the considerations and recommendations of various committees and commissions on education focuses on national priorities and future needs and the international best practices to meet the quality criterion.

The MONPA⁴ people: The Monpa tribe is considered to be one of the primitive tribes of Tawang District and West Kameng District. The Monpa people follow the Buddhist practices. They are known for their artistic creations that include beautiful Thangka painting, carpet making, weaving and wood carving. They are known to have been good at making paper from the sukso tree. They practice shifting cultivation and are known for producing barley, rice, maize, chili, wheat, pumpkin, beans etc. They are known for rearing domestic animals like yaks, pigs, cows, fowl and sheep. They are known to have followed the tradition of depending on nature and its various products. Losar, and Torgya are among the important festivals celebrated by the Monpa people. During some of these festivals, the Monpa people perform Ajilamu pantomime dances. The people celebrate

Losar as the Monpa New Year festival.
(https://www.indianetzone.com/8/monpa_tribe.htm)

The Monpa folktale **THE OLD MAN AND THE FROG** in the Textbook lesson form for the Primary school Class-III students of the Monpa tribe of the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh has been developed in its translated form in English. The NCERT suggestions and guidelines on text-transaction have been in spirit followed. Exercises have been given containing instructions on how best to handle the lesson to make English language skills development possible in the Monpa tribe students learning the English language. Strategies on teaching with the objective of development of various skills have been outlined in the process of handling the present textbook lesson. Recourse to picture illustration has not been taken as the tested-out experience is that student-participation in making meaning of contexts and situations in focus helps in the development of imagination and creativity if the folktale/story is presented, read and explained well. Instead of pictures being given, drawing activities involving students in discussion are seen to be helping the process of intelligent grasping of the content with memorisation of the developing order of events in building the story-line with simultaneous execution of the students' individual bent for art.

The MONPA folktale: THE OLD MAN AND THE FROG

Once upon a time there was an old man. He had never married in his life. He was very wealthy but he had no family of his own. He was constantly plagued by worries about who would conduct his last rituals after his death. So, one day he thought to himself, "Since I have no one to look after my death rituals. I will do it on my own now and prepare for death. So once I die, I can show to the God of Death that I have cleared all dues of this life and that way I will be directly ushered to next life."

Monpas have a very complex death ritual. It starts with a wake on the third day of a person's death. Then, there is another ritual to be observed on the 7th day. On the 14th day, there is a huge ceremony where all the Lhamas and monks are called on to pray for the departed soul so it can have an easy access to heaven. Finally, on the 49th day, there is a small prayer at home and a 'jhandi'(flag) is erected in the departed person's name.

Marvelling at his own plans, he started the preparation. So, he called on the monks to pray for his soul. He took out a mat made of a sheep's hide and spread it on the ground to sit on it during the prayer.

There was a small frog watching this from side-lines. The frog was very interested to learn how the prayers were said and how they sounded like. He sat hidden beneath a tree to watch the whole ordeal. When the old man spread his mat, he didn't realize that this frog was underneath it and sat on top of it. The frog was crushed to death immediately. The

old man didn't realize what happened though and his death rituals were successfully completed.

When the old man died, he met the God of Death and told him, "Lord, I have completed all the rituals that is necessary for a dead person. I also, don't have any wife or family that I have left behind. I have no obligations or regrets from my past life. Therefore, please allow me to gain access to my next life immediately."

The God of Death, "No my son, see this frog here? It has been waiting for you to arrive here since you were the cause of its death."

The old man was perplexed, "How can that be? I have never even seen it!"

God of Death replayed his past life in front of his eyes. The old man saw himself spreading the mat on top of the frog and sitting on it crushing it to death.

Filled with remorse, the old man turned to the frog and said, "Dear frog, this was an accident. I wasn't aware that I had sat on you and killed you. I am so sorry for what happened. Can you please forgive me?"

"No, that will never be. You crushed me to death so in the next life, you have to die in my hands. A life calls for a life." The frog showed no mercy.

The old man begged and begged but the frog wouldn't relent. Finally, they both turned to the God of Death for a solution. He felt pity for the old man so he said, "Since, the frog had died in your hand, it will be reborn as the husband and you will be its wife. This way, you have to learn to work out your differences and find love with each other." Thus, they were both sent to the next life.

The old man took birth in Lhasa Chang as a very beautiful girl. In this life too, she was unmarried even though she was graced with beauty in abundance.

One day, a very rich man came to ask her hand in marriage and she got married to him. They lived in a beautiful mansion and he gave her all the luxurious things she could want for.

Meanwhile, the frog was reborn in a small town called Mongphali in Tibet. He was a businessman. He was involved in beads business. He would get red beads called 'julu' and other such beads from south and sell them off at other villages and towns.

During one of his expedition, he stopped by at the couple's house to sell some of his beads. They were very welcoming. They fed him well and even let him stay for the night. He in return presented them with beautiful beads. The husband and this young man became friends and he would since stop by at their home on his journeys and spend time with them.

These meetings led to development of feelings of love between the young man and the wife. The husband found out about their affair and scolded his wife, "I have given you everything that you could want for. I am so rich that I could provide you with anything you ask. But why do you love him? In comparison to me, he is but a mere pauper. What have I done to you that was so wrong? Tell me one thing that I did wrong!"

It was destiny that these two fell in love for the God of Death had blessed them to be so. She replied, "You have done no wrong. I don't know what it is but I cannot stay away from him anymore."

The husband tried hard to convince her but it was vain. He at last admitted defeat, "Go if you must. I hope you lead a good life."

So, the young businessman and the wife left the home together. The first few years of their marriage were filled with bliss. They were both very happy with each other. But as time passed, they both started fighting. The man succumbed to drinking and he started beating his wife. The daily harassment and the stress led to her poor health and one day she passed away. Just as the old man had killed the frog by crushing it so had it gotten its revenge in their next birth by crushing the physical and mental health of the young wife that finally led to her death.

I. Reading strategies

Main idea: Wrong done will never go unpunished.

Theme: For the wrong done in one life, the person had to be punished in his next life.
The purpose of the story/folktale: The purpose of this folktale is to advise and warn readers/listeners about the bad results of wrong actions.

Story elements: The story has the old man, the frog, the monks, the God of Death, the businessman and his wife 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 not to do wrong things. The students are able to imagine all the scenes of action as the characters (except God of Death) are all drawn from their known stories and their surroundings.

Exercise:

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

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Comprehension Questions:

1. Why was the old man worried?
2. What happens on the 14th day of the death ritual of the Monpas ?
3. What did the old man tell the God of Death?
4. How did the God of Death explain that the old man had killed the frog?
5. How did the old man in his next birth as the wife of the frog die?

II. Writing strategies

[Writing strategies: Organising writing, Introductions and conclusions, Linking words, Developing and supporting arguments, Descriptive details]

Exercise:

1. 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)
2. Reproduce the Introduction section.
3. Reproduce the ending section.
4. Make a summary of the folktale-lesson.
5. Choose parts of the story where there is any conversation. Reproduce the same parts.
6. 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.
7. Show by comparison the characters who are strong.

III. Vocabulary

[To the Teacher: Let students look at the examples taken exactly from the lesson and ,wherever possible ,learn the use of Prefixes and suffixes , Compound words, Categories, Synonyms and antonyms, Multiple-meaning words, Shades of meaning, Context clues, Reference skills. Students will find it interesting and involving to identify and label sentences in the lesson and elsewhere.]

Directions to Students: Read the examples/exercises given on words and note the features of the same:

Exercise:

1.a) Prefixes: unmarried, reborn

b) Suffixes: wealthy, constantly, luxurious, Finally, immediately, successfully

2. a) Synonyms: wealthy, constantly, departed

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b) Antonyms: married, last, now, death, once, show, dues, directly, complex, huge , easy, heaven, Finally, small, started, interested, hidden, whole, top , completed, necessary ,dead, behind, gain, cause

3.Reference skills (Find the meaning , pronunciation and other important information on points of grammar from a dictionary): married, wealthy, rituals, plagued , worries, dues, huge, access, Marvelling, remorse, perplexed, mercy, relent, abundance, mansion ,luxurious ,Pauper, destiny

IV. Grammar and mechanics

Students need to be given knowledge of grammar in use in terms of Sentences, fragments and run-ons, Nouns, Pronouns, Verb types, Subject-verb agreement, Verb tense, Articles, Adjectives and adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions, Contractions, Commas, and Capitalisation.

[To the Teacher: Let students get to be acquainted with different sentence types with the sentences taken exactly from the lesson. The use of this way of answering is in the fact that students will find it interesting and involving to identify and label sentences in the lesson and elsewhere. Besides giving a confirmed acquaintance with features of the example sentences categorised as Simple, Compound or Complex, students will also be made to see the differences in these categories in terms of rules of English grammar.]

Exercise:

(A)Directions to Students: Read the sentences categorised as Simple, Compound or Complex and note the features of the same:

The Monpas have a very complex death ritual. (Simple sentence)

On the 14th day, there is a huge ceremony where all the Lhamas and monks are called on to pray for the departed soul so that it can have an easy access to heaven. (Complex sentence)

Finally, on the 49th day, there is a small prayer at home and a 'jhandi' is erected in the departed person's name. (Compound sentence)

Marvelling at his own plans, he started the preparation. (Simple sentence)

He took out a mat made of a sheep's hide and spread it on the ground to sit on it during the prayer. (Compound sentence)

There was a small frog watching this from side-lines. (Simple sentence)

The frog was very interested to learn how the prayers were said and how they sounded like. (Compound sentence)

He sat hidden beneath a tree to watch the whole ordeal. (Simple sentence)

When the old man spread his mat, he didn't realize that this frog was underneath it and sat on top of it. (Mixed sentence = (Compound sentence)+ (Complex sentence))

The frog was crushed to death immediately. (Simple sentence)

The old man didn't realize what happened though and his death rituals were successfully completed. (Mixed sentence = (Compound sentence)+ (Complex sentence))

The old man took birth in Lhasa Chang as a very beautiful girl. (Simple sentence)

In this life too, she was unmarried even though she was graced with beauty in abundance. (Complex sentence)

One day, a very rich man came to ask her hand in marriage and she got married to him. (Compound sentence)

They lived in a beautiful mansion and he gave her all the luxurious things she could want for. (Mixed sentence = (Compound sentence) + (Complex sentence))

Meanwhile, the frog was reborn in a small town called Mongphali in Tibet. (Simple sentence)

He was a businessman. (Simple sentence)

He was involved in beads business. (Simple sentence)

He would get red beads called 'julu' and other such beads from south and sell them off at other villages and towns. (Compound sentence)

During one of his expeditions, he stopped by at the couple's house to sell some of his beads. (Simple sentence)

They were very welcoming. (Simple sentence)

They fed him well and even let him stay for the night. (Compound sentence)

He in return presented them with beautiful beads. (Simple sentence)

The husband and this young man became friends and he would since stop by at their home on his journeys and spend time with them. (Compound sentence)

(B)Directions to Students: Write five sentences each under the categorised of Simple, Compound and Complex sentences.

V. Listening Activity

[To the Teacher : This section on **Listening Activity** is intended to hold the students' interest in listening to the different aspects of the English language and follow lesson-7989 | Dr. Krushna Chandra Mishra Using Folktales Of The Monpa Tribe As Primary School Textbook Lessons For Class-Iii English Language Teaching To Students Of The Same Tribe

unit/story. On usefulness of dictation in language learning, Davis and Rinvolutri⁵ observe that "Decoding the sounds of [English] and recoding them in writing is a major learning task" (1988). Frodesen⁶ recommends dictation as it is "an effective way to address grammatical errors in writing that may be the result of erroneous aural perception of English.... Dictation can help students to diagnose and correct these kinds of errors as well as others." (1991). The students will be given words, phrases and sentences from this lesson itself which they have to write down correctly following this dictation test. Students' writing will show if they know the words, phrases and sentences. If they write the items dictated correctly, it is congratulatory to assume that there is proper listening skill development. The wrong answers in the dictation will have to be given back to the concerned students who would be individually told where the problem in listening lies and how the problem would be overcome by regularly taking dictation and understanding how there is difference in the English sounds - in isolation and in various possible combinations in different words.]

Directions: Students are to answer the following questions:

1. Dictation of words. [To the Teacher: Words from this lesson as found suitable for the class are to be considered. The purpose is to give students the increasing awareness of the words in pronunciation, spelling and use. Gradually the stock of words would increase and in different contexts, students can put them to use.]

2. Dictation of phrases. [To the Teacher: Phrases from this lesson as found suitable for the class are to be considered. The purpose is to give students the increasing awareness of how different words come together to form phrases, what in their use as in the lesson here mean, and how phrases are used in the sentences in which they occur. Limiting the selection from the present lesson only is to make students go back to the lesson for finding out the different phrases to learn how in the available context they make their meaning clear. A further side benefit from this return to the phrases is that by reading the relevant portions, the students will have added mastery of the content and that would enhance their comprehension skills.]

3. Dictation of sentences. [To the Teacher: Sentences from different parts of the lesson/story need to be considered. That will later take the students on a discovery of incidents and characters and places with which the story/lesson is stitched together. Special attention has to be given in the selection of the sentences to cover important grammatical aspects involving the sentences – Types of sentences like Statement, Interrogative, Imperative etc. and also Simple, Compound and Complex sentences. As dictation of sentences takes place, students will be able to offer evidence that practically they are able to listen to and grasp and remember the whole collection of words that

together go to create the said sentences. Further, the dictation implying reading aloud by the teacher will go towards a model presentation of pauses and sentence-related stress.]

VI. Speaking Activity (Discussion)

Directions to students: Answer the following questions:

1. 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.

(To the Teacher: This is a help in making students comfortable, competent and confident speakers learning how to co-operate in taking turns that are necessary in a meaningful communicative/ conversational context. Picking up characters in conversation in this story is meant to revisit the relevant part; reproduce the said part for the role one would be interested in choosing/playing; and see and read from the script customised for individual roles or memorise the same and reproduce the dialogue. Understanding the context in which the conversation takes place will be facilitated in this process. Vocabulary-building will take place. Insight into using words in sentences as given in proper contexts will also be developed. Critical thinking suggested in such Role-play/enactment of scenes or events will also be naturally developed as students are able to work out what is being answered in keeping a thread of communication alive and active. Role play in a communicative language learning situation makes students actively involved in conversations (Nunan, 2001)⁷. Students' English-speaking skill can be developed properly if role play is used as much as possible in their learning. Role play becomes a solution for making the students be the centre and subject of learning instead of being object anymore (Tompkins, 1998)⁸. Ments (1999)⁹ holds that role play really provide students meaningful experiences where students not only understand but only they have to act or behave as if they are in real work.)

2. Do you think that the frog is more intelligent than the princess? If yes, tell where in the story there are examples to support your understanding.

(To the Teacher: This kind of comparing the characters would help in making students go back to the text/story and find out both characters more carefully. Further deciding who is more intelligent will make them critically evaluate and judge with facts as to why one is more intelligent. Engaging academically with the text will make them reason at a deeper level before they share their personal feelings while defending their pronouncements in public / before the whole class)

VII.MCQ

[To the Teacher : This MCQ section is 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 use of various

punctuation marks appearing in different parts of the story. The voluntary return to the text-book lesson-unit in the cited parts would have the students naturally develop greater hold over the sentence structures, words and phrases.]

Directions to students: Read the text given in the brackets if you want to find and confirm the correct choice as answer to the questions that follow:

1. [Read if you (the students) need: Once upon a time there was an old man. He had never married in his life. He was very wealthy but he had no family of his own. He was constantly plagued by worries about who would conduct his last rituals after his death. So, one day he thought to himself, "Since I have no one to look after my death rituals. I will do it on my own now and prepare for death. So once I die, I can show to the God of Death that I have cleared all dues of this life and that way I will be directly ushered to next life."]

"**Since** I have no one to look after my death rituals. I will do it on my own now and prepare for death. So once I die, I can show to the God of Death that I have cleared all dues of this life and that way I will be directly ushered to next life." -Who is the speaker?

- A. The next life
- B. The old man
- C. The God of Death
- D. The death rituals

2. [Read if you (the students) need: When the old man died, he met the God of Death and told him, "Lord, I have completed all the rituals that is necessary for a dead person. I also, don't have any wife or family that I have left behind. I have no obligations or regrets from my past life. Therefore, please allow me to gain access to my next life immediately."

The God of Death, "No my son, see this frog here? It has been waiting for you to arrive here since you were the cause of its death."

The old man was perplexed, "How can that be? I have never even seen it!"

God of Death replayed his past life in front of his eyes. The old man saw himself spreading the mat on top of the frog and sitting on it crushing it to death.]

a) "Lord, I have completed all the rituals that is necessary for a dead person. I also, don't have any wife or family that I have left behind. I have no obligations or regrets from my past life. Therefore, please allow me to gain access to my next life immediately." -Who is the speaker?

- A. The frog
- B. The old man

C. The God of Death

D. The son

b) "No my son, see this frog here? It has been waiting for you to arrive here since you were the cause of its death." -Who is the speaker?

A. The frog

B. The old man

C. The God of Death

D. The son

c) "How can that be? I have never even seen it!" -Who is the speaker?

A. The frog

B. The old man

C. The God of Death

D. The son

3. [Read if you (the students) need: Filled with remorse, the old man turned to the frog and said, "Dear frog, this was an accident. I wasn't aware that I had sat on you and killed you. I am so sorry for what happened. Can you please forgive me?"

"No, that will never be. You crushed me to death so in the next life, you have to die in my hands. A life calls for a life." The frog showed no mercy.]

a) "Dear frog, this was an accident. I wasn't aware that I had sat on you and killed you. I am so sorry for what happened. Can you please forgive me?" -Who is the speaker?

A. The frog

B. The old man

C. The death

D. The next life

b) "No, that will never be. You crushed me to death so in the next life, you have to die in my hands. A life calls for a life." -Who is the speaker?

A. The frog

B. The old man

C. The death

D.The next life

4. [Read if you (the students) need: The old man begged and begged but the frog wouldn't relent. Finally, they both turned to the God of Death for a solution. He felt pity for the old man so he said, "Since, the frog had died in your hand, it will be reborn as the husband and you will be its wife. This way, you have to learn to work out your differences and find love with each other." Thus, they were both sent to the next life.]

"Since, the frog had died in your hand, it will be reborn as the husband and you will be its wife. This way, you have to learn to work out your differences and find love with each other." -Who is the speaker?

A. The Death

B. The frog

C. The God of Death

D. The old man

5. [Read if you (the students) need: These meetings led to development of feelings of love between the young man and the wife. The husband found out about their affair and scolded his wife, "I have given you everything that you could want for. I am so rich that I could provide you with anything you ask. But why do you love him? In comparison to me, he is but a mere pauper. What have I done to you that was so wrong? Tell me one thing that I did wrong!"]

"I have given you everything that you could want for. I am so rich that I could provide you with anything you ask. But why do you love him? In comparison to me, he is but a mere pauper. What have I done to you that was so wrong? Tell me one thing that I did wrong!"

-Who is the speaker?

A. The young man

B. The wife.

C. The husband

D.The pauper

6. [Read if you (the students) need: It was destiny that these two fell in love for the God of Death had blessed them to be so. She replied, "You have done no wrong. I don't know what it is but I cannot stay away from him anymore."

The husband tried hard to convince her but it was vain. He at last admitted defeat, "Go if you must. I hope you lead a good life."]

a) "You have done no wrong. I don't know what it is but I cannot stay away from him anymore." - -Who is the speaker?

A. the God of Death

B. The destiny

C. The husband

D. The wife

b) "Go if you must. I hope you lead a good life." - -Who is the speaker?

A. the God of Death

B. The destiny

C. The husband

D. The wife

Conclusion: Lessons like the present one in the above example appear to be very effective. The folktale from their own tribe as above brings their familiar world of objects and people and social and cultural practices from their very tribal surroundings to make the lesson enjoyable and highly engaging as learning material for the Primary school Class-III level children who come from the Monpa tribe.

Note and References:

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