



Teacher Author

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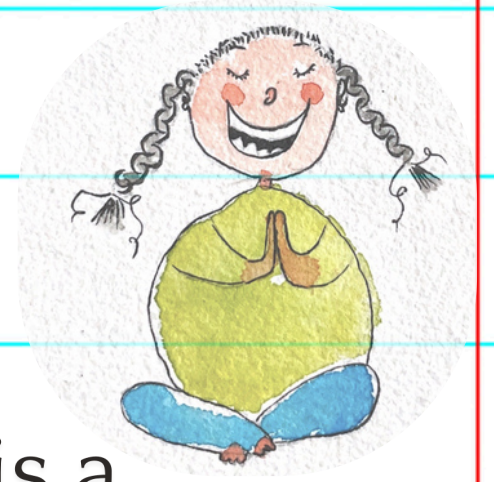
Disclaimer:

Dear Reader,

Although we have tried to put this note about the Teacher Author program in a succinct manner, there is a great possibility that you might lose interest mid-way.

However if you do complete reading till the end, it would be great if you could share your thoughts with us

(at teachers.authors@gmail.com) on the questions highlighted.



Objectives of the note:

1. To (broadly) articulate the 'problem' and the preparation that went into designing of a program as an attempted solution.
2. To draw attention towards some of the challenges faced as a novice entrepreneur
3. To celebrate four years of creating children's literature with **207** Teacher Author participants and of course the...



Team



Founder
Sheetal Paul



Mentor
Vinod Karate



Illustrator
Ishtha Kapoor



Illustrator
Sonia Mondal

The Problem

The strategic elimination of the child's language from formal learning spaces (classroom) has been an area of concern and discussion in the National level policies since the 1980s. Research (locally and globally) highlights that, 'Children especially in the foundational years, need contextually relevant and cognitively appropriate resources for learning. These reading materials are especially to be available and accessible to the learners in their first language also called the mother tongue.

Census 2011, claims that '19500 languages and dialects are spoken in India and (only) 26-33 languages are taught in schools' and formal spaces. Thereby indicating '**language**' as one of the critical reasons for dropout rates amongst young children.

To understand the dearth of resources in the language classroom, one will have to look at the direct relationship of the value given to children's language/s and therefore their socio-emotional-cognitive and cultural repertoire of experiences. Now, since teachers have direct access to learners' diverse repertoire of experiences, which necessarily entails, their thoughts, arguments, complaints, AHA moments and even silence, teachers are the one who can actually bring those experiences into textual focus by writing stories, poems, narratives, descriptive texts in the language of the child. This would directly facilitate in language development including literacy. And it is precisely this problem that we at the Teacher Author program are trying to address.

उन्नीस हजार भाषाएँ, और बोलियाँ बोली है जाती,
पर 'पढ़ते' समय मेरी बात, टीचर को समझ नहीं आती,
बस इंग्लिश- हिंदी बड़-बड़ कर, कुछ घंटे यूँ बिताती,
पर, जब डाँट लगानी होती है या प्यार से जब सहलाती,
तो अपनी ही बोली में वो, रौब खूब है जमाती!



The Preparation

We do understand it is a 'busy' world out there. Teachers especially, are pre-occupied with various educational activities around language education, that might cater to their professional needs and burning questions experienced in the classrooms.

However it is also because we understand the immersion into capacity building of professionals and the need for engaging in a creative process which should be nothing but empowering, our only concern has been on attempting to design a program to achieve the following **objectives**:

1. **Exposure to children's literature available in the local and global market**
2. **Develop theoretical understanding around 'good' children's literature**
3. **Create critical, contextual and comprehensive children's literature in the language of our learners.**

Talking about designing the course, it is true, that although the design was quite experimental (not mercurial) for the first three cohorts, we continued to experiment and explore the need of an initiative, that invited teachers, students of education and children's literature enthusiasts to engage with the theoretical and practical aspect around writing.

The initial cohorts were deliberated around the quality of texts read and written, digital accessibility for the participants during the peak covid times, and most importantly originality and authenticity in the material critiqued and created during the workshop. Yes, Indeed in addition to these factors, a conscious need to ponder on the credibility of the program did grow, but only gradually and much later.

Thus as an attempt to address the problem with a creative solution, we reached out to engage teachers (from across the country) in understanding the need to create contextual, comprehensive and critical children's literature in the languages and dialects of Indian children.

The purpose of the Teacher Author program is to build the capacity of teachers, teaching language in the primary schools, so that they can use the experiences of their learners as resources to create meaningful children's literature for their own learners. This would facilitate in foundational learning, as language plays a critical role in the overall learning experience especially in the primary years.

The focus of the program, is not only on providing technical support to participants, to upskill the journey of writing, but also to

- (a) Provide theoretical underpinnings around the **concept of Language, learning and role of language in learning**
- (b) Observe illustrations and thus create literature, which is meaningful and contextually relevant for their learners.
- (c) Develop disposition towards good children's literature

Since the program took shape during the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, discussions and presentations around some of the theoretical aspects of children's literature in the form of webinars/ talks/ focussed conversations were of great help in preparing and mobilising for the workshops.

Grateful to [Azim Premji University \(Bangalore\)](#) for organising a webinar in February 2020, and encouraging us alumni to share our work/interest, based on our professional experiences.

You may check out the webinar here: [Creating Children's Literature.](#)



[JanSarokar Manch \(Rajasthan\)](#) an online platform, organised a session inviting discussion on प्राथमिक कक्षा में बाल साहित्य : क्यों और कैसे चुने?

[Mihir Pathak \(Gujarat\)](#), organised a webinar on : बच्चों के शिक्षण में बाल साहित्य की भूमिका

[Usha Chhabra \(New Delhi\)](#), Founder at Usha Chhabra Institute For Creative Engagement, organised a talk show- 'Making a Difference' wherein we discussed the 'Need around- Children's Literature and Teacher Author.'

[Anupa Gnanakan Sundaram](#) (Director- Education) conversed around the idea of the Teacher Author Program and future prospects.



Coming back to the central idea of the Teacher Author program, which is writing children's literature, it would be important to emphasise or perhaps reiterate what research claims, about **writing being a process**. There are good reasons for one to not deny the claim. We at the Teacher Author believe that while it is process indeed, the process itself needs to be appropriately challenging. And to ensure the same, constructive activities and critical feedback are included for participants to experience its worth organically.

The process of writing, inevitably entails reading for pleasure and understanding, reading to understand what 'goodness' the piece of children's literature holds, and of course, reading to write better.

We read some classic children's literature authored locally and globally, primarily in Hindi and in English language. However participants are encouraged to read and write in their own regional languages!

Assamese

Bundelkhandi

Tamil

Marathi

Urdu

Malayalam

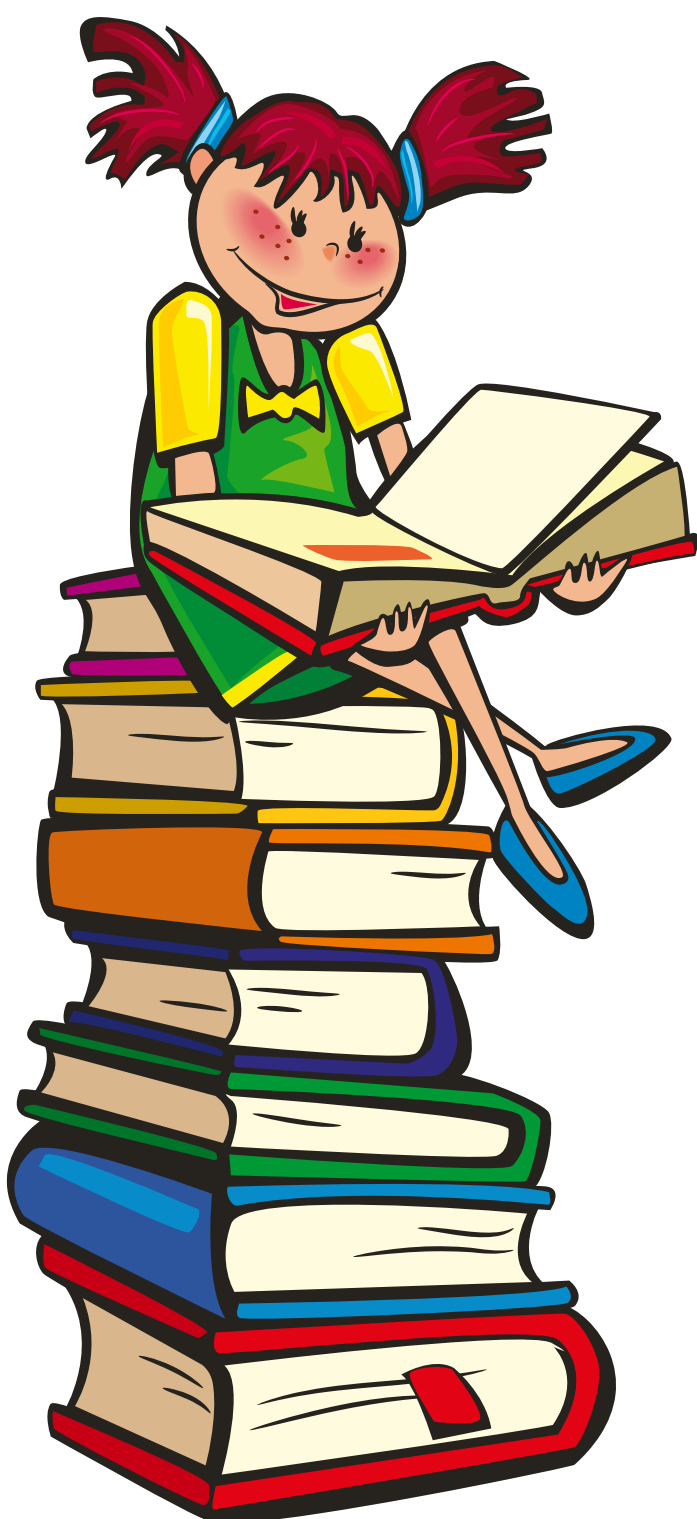
Kannada

Gujarati

Telugu

Punjabi

Bengali



The other critical aspect that we dwell upon in the Teacher Author workshop is the role of illustration. Thus constructing understanding around the importance of illustrations for young readers is another aspect we prepare for.

We are very grateful to illustrators from across the globe, who have generously supported us with their creative contributions since June 2020.

Exceptional artists like Suresh Eriyat (Founder at Eeksaurus, Mumbai), Tarun Deep Girdhar (Faculty at NID, Ahmedabad), Priya Kurian (Award winning children's literature illustrator), Allen Shaw, Catherine Rayner, IravGust, Niharika Shenoy, Imke Sonnichsen (All available on Instagram) have been our go-to illustrations contributors.

And of course our very own in-house illustrators Sonia Mondal and Ishtha Kapoor, who have also contributed towards DISCO and RAW! Before we go into briefing about these follow-up workshops, here is a glimpse of some scripts written during the workshops on few of Suresh Eriyat's illustrations!

Barberian Bob



Barberian Bob was his surly name,
In all his ways, he was just the same
Gruff, tough, manic and vile
Gentle and polite was just not his style!

He sheared off the manes of the boys in town
And boy! Could he give them a dressing down!
Dared not they bar Bob's attempts to bare
Their heads of their prideful yet pitiful hair.

Snippety Snap! Clickety clack!
Barberian's instruments had clearly no lack.
In seconds the floor gained brand new carpets
Of greasy and licetty shreds of hair sets.

In all the town no one could tell
If Barberian Bob had company to dwell
All they knew was to keep their peace
And ask no questions and surrender their fleece.

Writer: Ian Castelino
Bangalore Steiner School

पिचकूची



मैं हूँ मास्टर पिचकूची
बैठा बाइक पर सिसकूची,
जब बोले दोनों थोड़ा खिसक
मुझे आया गुस्सा जोश की!
बाइक चली तूफानों में
मिट्टी नाक और कानों में!
पार्टी पर जाने का फायदा क्या
जब बाइक पर हो गई डिस्को जी!

कविता : असीस कौर
माता सुंदरी कॉलेज (नई दिल्ली)

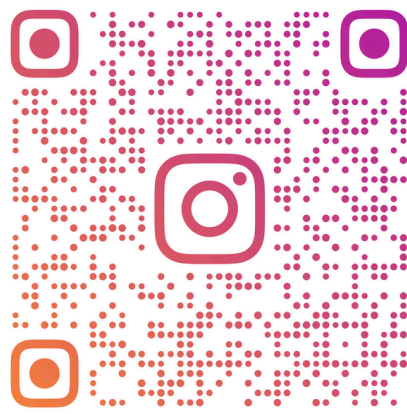
Lion's Trainee



Today a silly human came,
Thinking, roaring is a game!
Wanted to try my famous pose
So I kept him on his toes!
A weakly, boney, teathy man,
On his knees, body so tan.
I ordered him to give a shout,
He only threw his big tongue out.
Ah ! So annoying, my temper is blown
He is a human, I should have known.
Still took him under my very own wing
As an apprentice to the king!
And then he shook and finally roared,
I almost fainted, I was floored!
What's that smell? I felt crushed.
And wondered if humans ever brushed!

Writer: Rasleen Kaur
and Sheetal Paul
Students of Education

Like what you read, for more scan here :



SUBSCRIBE

Follow-up Workshops

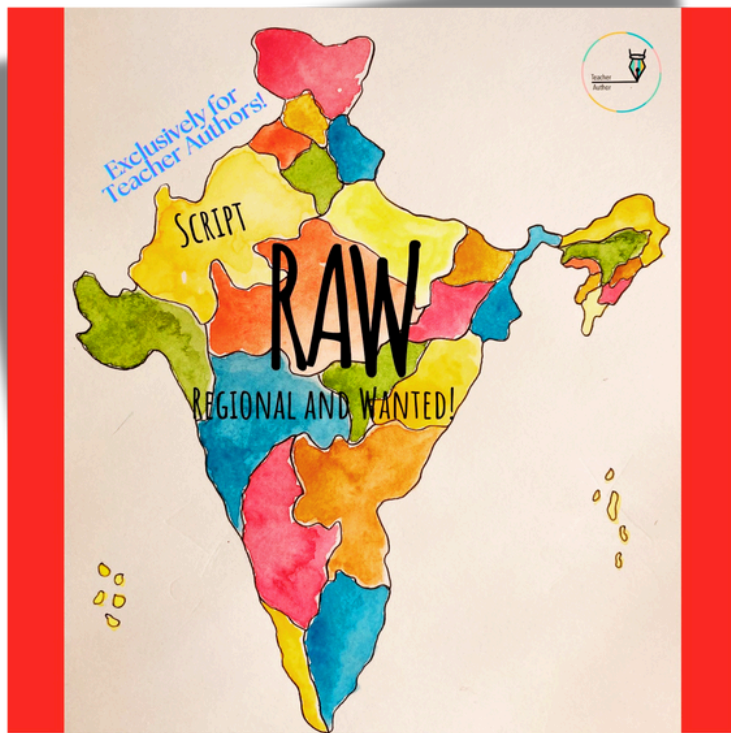
DISCO and **RAW** are primarily two follow-up workshops we conduct exclusively for Teacher Authors.

While **DISCO** is designed to script picture books, **RAW** is designed to create poems in regional languages.

The critical objective to have the follow-up activities is to maintain the spirit of scripting in the community!

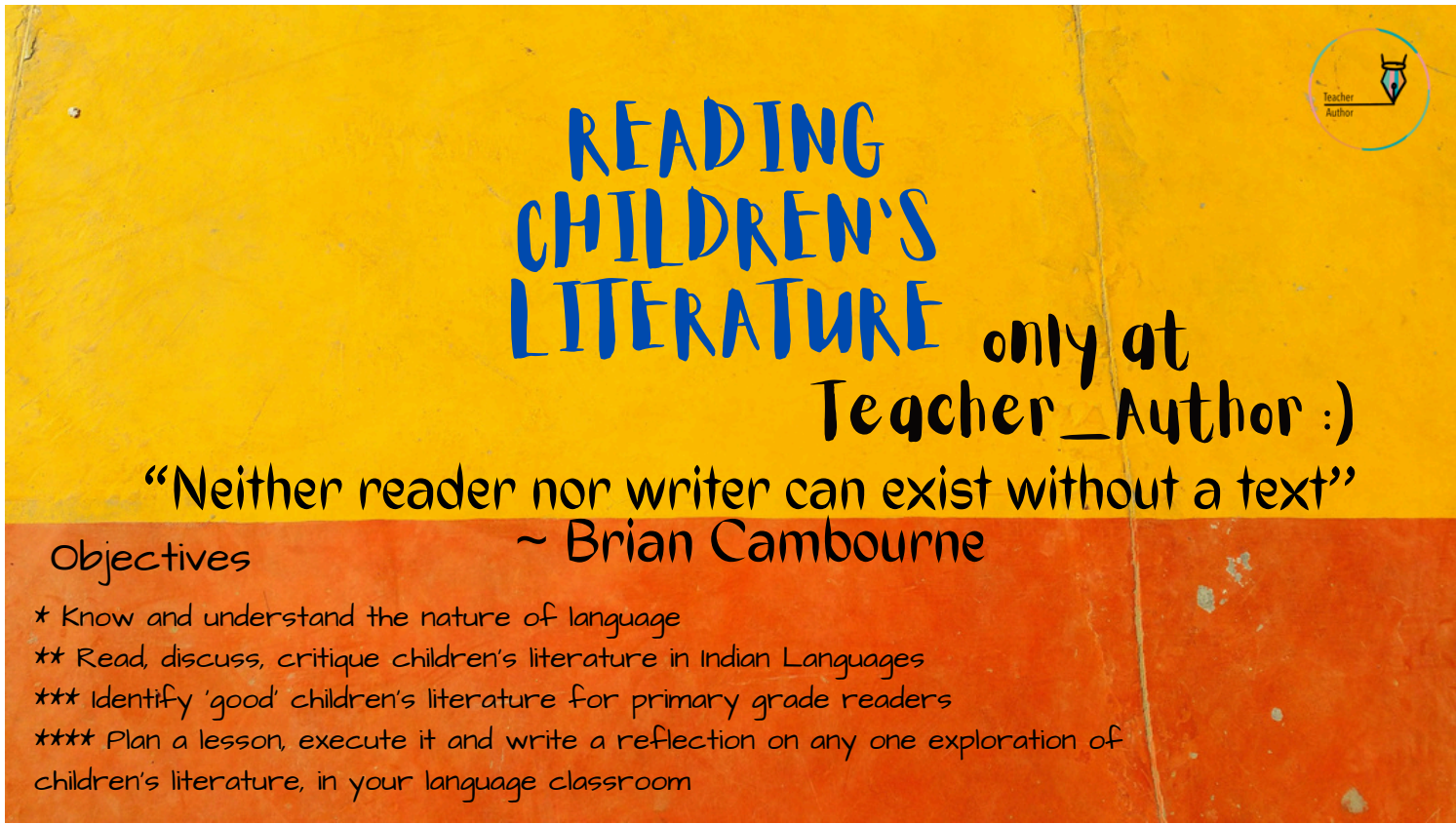


- D- Deliberate on an Idea
- I - Ink the idea
- S- Storyboard
- C- Call with an Illustrator
- O- Outcome analysis



- R- Regional
- A- And
- W- Wanted

Additionally we have workshop on: Reading Children’s Literature



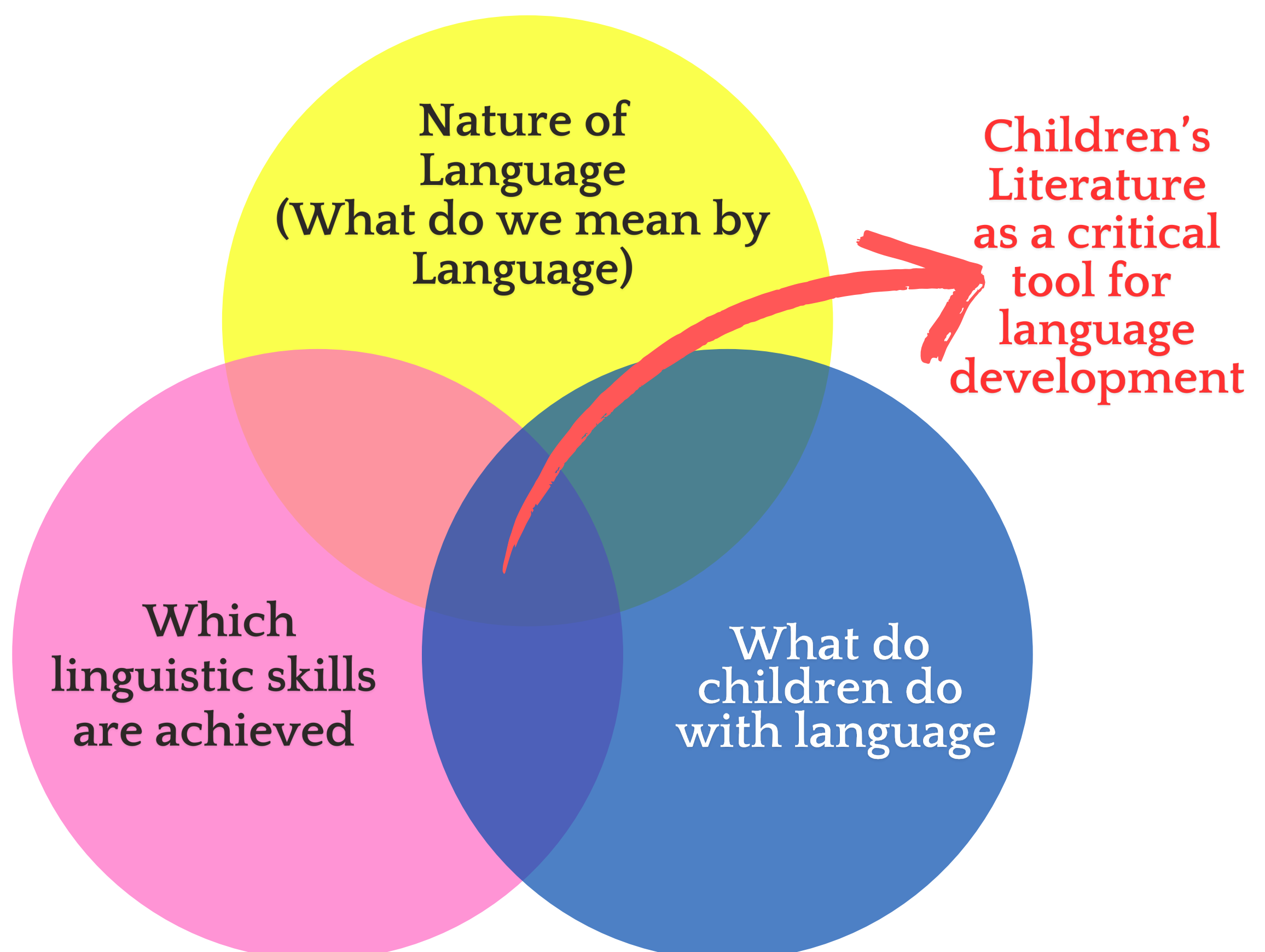
The Challenge(s)

To dive into the unknown can be scary in the beginning, however the good part in diving into scripting at the Teacher Author workshop was that it was not completely unknown. While the diving was motivated with the intention to create critical, contextual and comprehensive children's literature; And creation is an empowering act in itself, there were a couple of challenges that changed its nature from batch 3 or 4 onwards.

Since it was in June 2020, that we started the workshop (initially a 10 weekends timeline) pandemic had its effect on the physical and mental participation, throughout. We began with 18 participants and navigated through what worked best for the cohort.

1. The critical most challenge that we faced was to test the waters to see if colleagues from across the country would be interested to write children's literature
2. Since the workshop is primarily facilitated in Hindi and English, it was essential to onboard members who were comfortable in both the languages
3. Since not everybody was from an educational background, it was essential to present the theoretical framework in a manner that is articulated well.

Figure below, shows three critical elements that are discussed in details for better understanding of the nature of children's literature.



The Challenges (cont..)

4. To ensure participants commit to attend and actively participate in all the sessions
5. To provide constructive feedback according to the zone of proximal development for each member, thereby having a broad understanding of their socio-cultural-professional contexts and language was essential
6. Mobilising on social media (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Website etc.) and through word of mouth to reach out to potential Teacher Authors
7. Funds crunch to support some of the Teacher Author participants
8. And last but not the least, to keep the community motivated to continue to read script and take the material to their learners, once the workshop concludes.

*If this intrigues you as a potential Teacher Author and you would like to know how we try and overcome most of the challenges mentioned above, you may join the workshop, by registering [here](#) :)

The Celebration

Anthologies in Hindi and English; Out Now!



The Celebration (continues :)

As the 22 batches have now completed the scripty journey, it would be safe to say, that most of the participants have started to pick on the universal characteristics of good children's literature, some have also started to delve deeper into analysing children's literature through various lens like morality, inclusion, aspects related to literacy and language development. It is a delight to see that the belief around learning the skill to write children's literature, is grounded on the balance between educational theory, practice and a ripe disposition towards reading children's literature :)

As we celebrate four years of the Teacher Author program, A BIG shout out to friends in and outside the profession, educators and colleagues, curious strangers, and most importantly Teacher Author participants who have grown into a community of thinkers, readers and writers of children's literature from India. We hope and intend to continue in the scripty spirit of writing for young learners of our country!

Testimonials

'The Teacher Author workshop was broadly structured around: children's literature, education, psychology and philosophy. The content was very well structured, the pace was good, and each session was rigorous. As an educator, I believe that there was an introduction to new themes, lots of examples to show the work that has been done on those themes, ample amount of space for discussions and questions, and engaging with writing on a daily basis. We've looked at, appreciated, critiqued each other's work extensively and learnt a lot from each other.

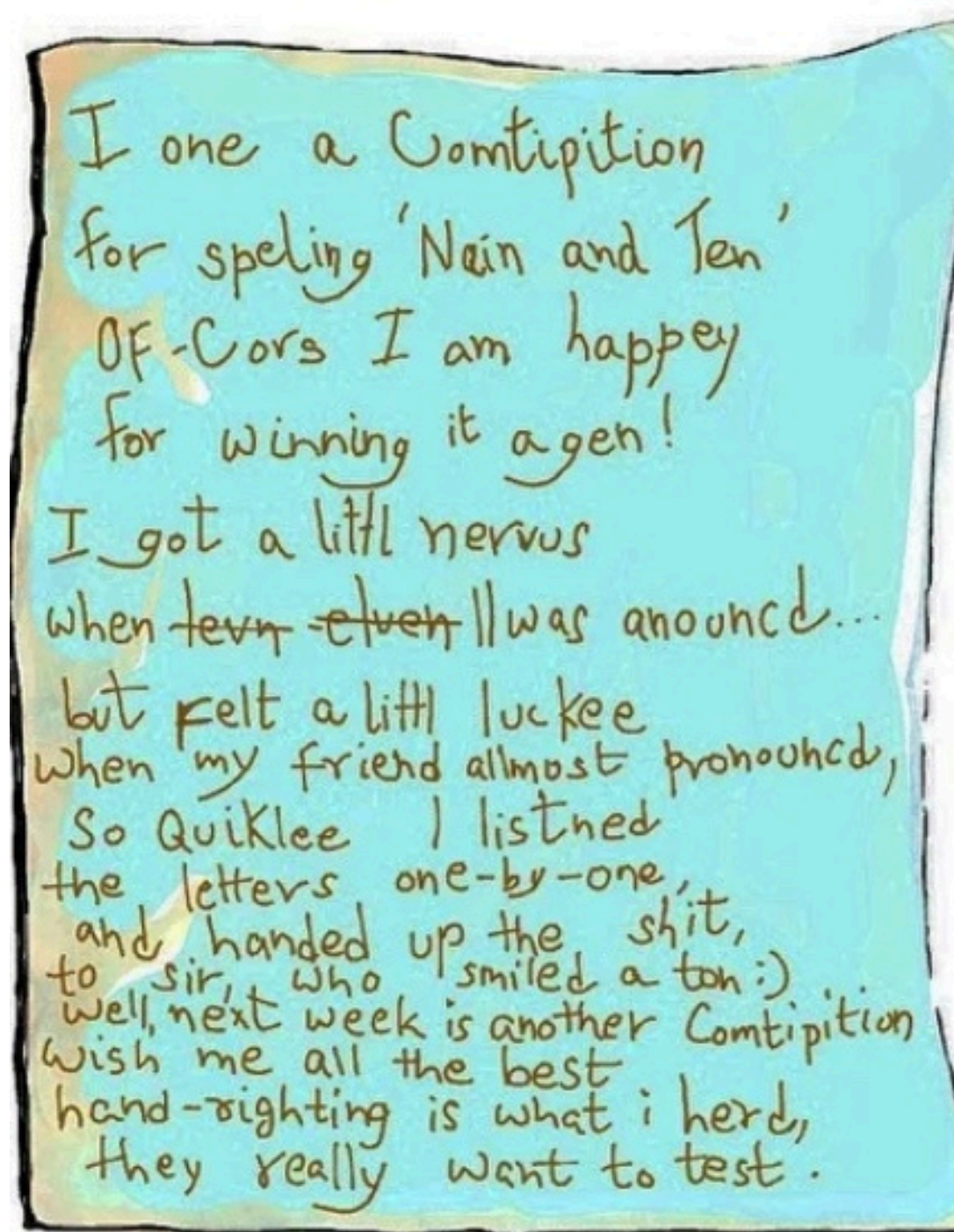
The Teacher_Author Program is, not for the faint-hearted. It'll make you think, read, write, read again, critique, engage, write again and then it'll make you erase all of that and start again but that's what writing is all about.'

~ Ankita Raina, Pratham Education Foundation

To read more testimonials, you may click [here](#).

Special shout out to Vinod, the problem-solving mentor you have been!
 Ishtha for your enthusiasm and artistic strokes and Sonia for the patience and perfection you always bring along! None of this could have happened the way it has :)
 You guys have boosted me into making better errors over these four years...
 Cheers!
 Sheetal
 Founder at Teacher Author

Talking about errors, here is a script to articulate precisely what I mean :p



By: Shital Paul

Questions for the reader

1. How important do you think it is for the teachers to write for and with their learners in their language?
2. What challenges do you face while working around language education especially around reading and writing with your learners?
3. Do your students have access to good children's literature in their languages? If not, then how do you address the 'problem'?
4. Can you pick any one or two poems, that you may have come across in this note/video and translate it into your language?
5. In case you want to know more about the Teacher Author program? Please send in your query at teachers.authors@gmail.com