COMPREHENSION OF POETRY

CHAPTER 6

METHODOLOGY

The research problem has already been stated in the introduction. It is to find out the comprehension of poetry by selecting poems from Marathi as the first language and English as the second language.

The number of poems from both the languages were restricted to five each. Selecting more poems would have become unmanageable from the testing and administrative point of view. Therefore only five representative poems from Marathi and English were selected.

The research methodology demands an up-to-date procedure to be followed. The research design should be flexible, up-to-date, efficient and also economical. It should minimize the bias and maximize the reliability of the data collected and analysed. It should also yield maximum information and provide an opportunity for considering different aspects of the problem (Kothari 1986). Keeping this in mind the questionnaire was framed relating it to the language learning process which consists of reception, perception, understanding and comprehension which are elaborately discussed in the following pages.

Based on these processes the questionnaire was divided into three parts - First - Multiple choice questions, Second - Descriptive type questions and Third - Questions asking the students to write their impressions. Multiple choice questions for both Marathi and English poems are meant for testing the reception and perception ability in language learning. This stage leads them to understanding and comprehension. These questions were framed on the basis of
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words, images, descriptions which could be easily located in the poems. These questions expect answers based on words in the poems. We saw to it that they were not stereotyped. For example the fourth question on the Marathi poem "Mrutyulya Mhanato Sabura" is a multiple choice question:

4) mrutyul yeu nako ki he (Death, please do not come)
bola kavicya manata These words came from the
umatale karana poet because ...

(a) tyane cimanila pahile. (He saw a sparrow).

(b) tyane pilanna pahile. (He saw the young ones of the sparrow.)

(c) tyane cimanila ani pilancya (He saw motherly love in
rupane jagata vatsalya the form of the sparrow &
dharma pahila the young ones).

(d) cimanila ani pilancya mule (Because of the sparrow &
tyala apalya mulanci the young ones he remembered
athavan jhali his children.)

Similarly the first question on the English poem, "Break, break, break" was:

1. 'By Cold Grey stones' means -

(a) The unemotional grey stones on the sea shore.

(b) The cold colourful stones in the sea.

(c) Grey painted stones.

Thus the Marathi Question expects the students to choose the correct reason for a preceding statement whereas the English question asks to choose the correct meaning or a statement. In this way there is a variety of questions in the multiple choice type.

The above type of Multiple choice questions were set
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on all the poems. But some of the poems could not have as many multiple choice questions as were possible on other poems. For example on the Marathi poem "Audumbara" as many as seven M-C questions could be easily framed, whereas on "Sabdance Isvara" only two questions could possibly be framed. Similarly on the English poem, "The Solitary Reaper" as many as fifteen M-C questions could be framed whereas on the poem, "When you are old and grey" only six Multiple Choice questions were possible. This was due to the continuity and the complication of ideas and images in the later poem and the clarity and separateness of ideas and images in the earlier poem.

The distractors in a multiple choice are based on the vocabulary items in the poems which lead the students to the proper and expected meaning, for example the 'k' and 'd' responses to the fourth question on, "Mrutyula Mhanato Sabura" are close to each other and the selection reveals whether the student has reception and perception or not. The choice of 'k' is proper, whereas the choice of 'd' is nearer to correct. The 'k' choice requires precision in reception and perception. Therefore the correct answer at this stage shows refined reception and perception. The same is true about English. We see that the answers listed can be found in the poem itself. Sometimes the distractors may not be available in the poem, for example question number five on the poem "The Solitary Reaper".

(5) "The song of the Nightingale was welcome to"

a) the poet,

b) the traveller,

c) to the readers. Here distractor 'C' is not
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mentioned in the poem but still it is valid in the context.

Although some distractors contain words from the poem, they are not simple. In preparing the distractors we have taken into account students' habits, the nature of the poem and the expected level of understanding.

The descriptive questions were framed stanzawise but when it was not possible, they were framed idea or imagewise. Since the intention was to elicit maximum information on each poem, the questions were framed in a simple language. Sometimes the complete expressions, words or phrases were made use of in framing the questions, for example there are questions on words like 'yudhishtira', 'supa', 'jate', in the poem 'Mrutyula Mhanato Sabura' and 'basala', 'pivala', in the poem 'Audumbara' and 'Devajine Karuna Keli'.

In the same way, in English on the poem, "One word is too often profaned", 'one word', "one feeling", "One hope" these phrases have been used for framing questions. The following is an example of a simple descriptive question on the poem. "The Solitary Reaper" qu. No. 6 which activities of the girl are mentioned in the Poem ? The questions on each poem were based on the total meaning of the poem. They were all text based that is the answers to these questions were to be found in the poem themselves. The questions covered the poem as a unit of understanding. Not a single idea was left untouched while framing these questions.

The questionnaire has a third type of questions framed mainly to test the comprehension level of the students. The
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Students are expected to record their impression about the poems — both Marathi and English. The questions are framed in the following way: The Marathi poem, "Devajine Karuna Keli" "Devajine Karuna Kelyavara samanya manasace ayushya badalate ka? konakonte badala hotata? savistara liha." In addition to such questions the students were asked orally to write their total impressions on poems.

Similarly in English the above types of questions were not actually framed but a general comprehensive question was framed on each poem. For example — "Please write your impression about this poem". Thus the questionnaire works along three tier types of questions aiming at three different levels of understanding mentioned above.

Preparation of Model Answers

For each and every question whether Multiple Choice, or Descriptive, model answers were prepared on the basis of the subject matter, the thematic impressions, life experience, allusions available in the poems themselves. There cannot be a model answer for the third type of question — writing one's impressions about the poem.

If the purpose of Multiple Choice questions was to test the surface or the obvious meaning of words, phrases or statements, the purpose of Descriptive questions was to test understanding of the thoughts and ideas contained in the poem. The students while answering the descriptive type questions were expected to write their answers using full statements — using one, two or three sentences. The correct answers (Model answers) were prepared in the full statement
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Forms to tally them with those of the students. If we list all the model answers on a poem, we get a total summary or a simple paraphrase of the poem which ensures understanding of the poem. These answers of descriptive questions are a help in writing the third type of question. We find that the third type of questions test different processes - reception, perception, understanding and comprehension.

Administering the Test and Data Presentation

The next and the most important part of the research methodology consists of administering the test successfully. It was decided to administer the test to the undergraduate arts students. Both rural and urban colleges were selected with the view to include all types of students. The colleges selected were:

Rural Area:
1. Bodwad (Arts and Commerce College, Bodwad)
2. Yawal (Arts and Commerce College, Yawal)
3. Varangaon (Arts and Commerce College, Varangaon)
4. Bhusaval (Bhusaval Arts, Science & POND Commerce College, Bhusaval)
5. Bhusaval (P.K. Kotecha, Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Bhusaval)
6. Jamner (Arts & Commerce College, Jamner)

Urban Area:
1. Jalgaon (A.G.D. Bendale Girls' College, Jalgaon)
2. Jalgaon (M.J. College, Jalgaon)
3. Pune (Modern College, Pune)
4. Pune (Fergusson College, Pune)
5. Pune (Abasaheb Garware College, Pune)
Suitable oral instructions about writing the answers to the different type of questions were given. The purpose of the questionnaire and the purpose of the survey were also explained to them. Seven Colleges were selected for administering the test on Marathi poems and Nine Colleges were selected for English poems. They were given enough time, about two hours, to read the poems and write the answers. Nobody asked for more time. We wanted at least fifty students to give responses to each pair of poems. Those who did not respond to either poem were eliminated from the final data. It was not necessary that a particular poem should go with another particular poem. The questionnaires in Marathi and English were given to different students at different times. The writing of the answers was done in the class rooms and no one was allowed to take home the answer sheets. This was done with a view to keep uniformity in administering the test and to ensure that the responses were of an individual student alone. The response sheets which were totally blank that is without any response or answer to any question were rejected. The percentage of blank sheets for Marathi poems was less as compared to that for English poems.

The Colleges where tests were conducted have been numbered one to seven for Marathi and one to nine for English. The test sheets from each college were numbered serially. Different batches of students were selected for English and Marathi poems. The following table shows the areas selected and the number of students in a batch -
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Arts and Commerce College Bodwas, Dist. Jalgaon.</td>
<td>(1 to 16) 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Arts and Commerce College Yawal, Dist. Jalgaon.</td>
<td>(17 to 30) 14</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Arts and Commerce College Varangaon Dist. Jalgaon.</td>
<td>(31 to 41) 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>A.G.D. Bendale Girls' College, Jalgaon.</td>
<td>(58 to 85) 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Fergusson College, Pune, Dist. Pune</td>
<td>(86 to 95) 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Modern College, Pune, Dist. Pune</td>
<td>(96 to 125) 30</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total - 125
## Comprehension of Poetry

### English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Colleges</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rural Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Arts, Science &amp; PON Commerce College,</td>
<td>(1 to 20) 20</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhusaval, Dist. Jalgaon</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>P. K. Kotecha Mahila Mahavidyalaya.</td>
<td>(21 to 30) 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhusaval, Dist. Jalgaon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Arts and Commerce College, Jamner</td>
<td>(31 to 50) 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dist. Jalgaon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Arts and Commerce College, Varangaon</td>
<td>(51 to 60) 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dist. Jalgaon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urban Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>M. J. College, Jalgaon, Dist. Jalgaon</td>
<td>(61 to 71) 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>A.G.D. Bendale Girls' College, Jalgaon</td>
<td>(72 to 98) 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Modern College, Pune</td>
<td>(79 to 99) 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Fergusson College, Pune</td>
<td>(100 to 115) 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Abasaheb Garware College, Pune</td>
<td>(116 to 125) 10</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total 125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We got 125 respondents for English poems and 125 respondents for Marathi poems. In these 125 responses each poem is responded to by 50 students. Each student responded to two poems that is there were 250 responses to individual poems. The poems in the response sheets were numbered as under -

**Marathi Poems : numbered 'A' to 'E'**

- 'A' 'Devajine Karuna Keli'
- 'B' 'Audumbara'

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The English poems were numbered 'M' to 'Q'

'M' 'Break break break'

'N' 'One word is too often profaned'

'O' 'When you are old and grey'

'P' 'The Solitary Reaper'

'Q' 'The Tiger'

As mentioned above each student was given two poems to record his impressions. The pairing or the selection of these two poems was done at random. About ten pairs of poems were prepared for both Marathi and English, for example ab, ac, ad, ae, bc, bd, be, cd, ce, de and mn, mo, mp, mq, no, np, nq, op, oq, pq. The pairs were numbered sequentially, for example ab1, bc2, cd3 and the same pair number was assigned to the poem, for example - ab1 : a1, b1, bc2 : b2c2.

The observations and the scrutiny of the response sheets necessitated the formulation of the following types of responses -

1. Correct responses (C)
2. Incorrect responses (Inc)
3. Nearer to correct response (NC)
4. No answer - responses at all (NA/NR)

The correct responses were like the model answers, the incorrect responses were different and therefore irrelevant and nearer to correct responses were partially correct. The tabulation of answers was done collegewise, studentwise and poemwise. The responses were tabulated on
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the basis of three types of questions discussed earlier. Multiple choice (MC), Descriptive type (Des), and Impression type (Imp). The data was tabulated on the basis of the following -

(i) Individual responses
(ii) Individual poemwise
(iii) Collegewise, and
(iv) Urban and rural area wise.

As a part of the research procedure the above tabulated material has again been considered and each table is represented in the form of computerised graph(s).