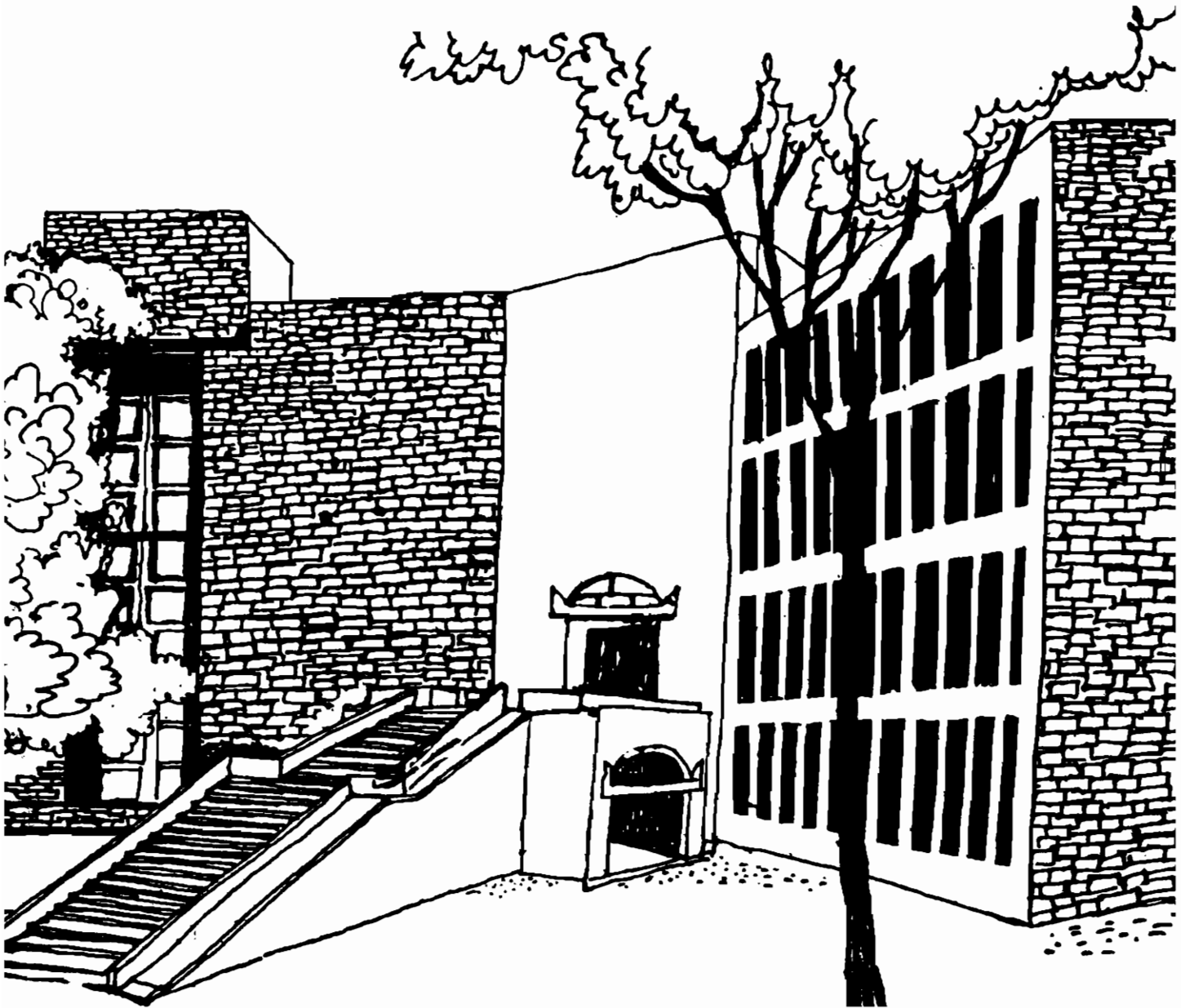




# Working Paper



SAME LANGUAGE SUBTITLING:  
LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA  
THROUGH FILM SONGS

By

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**Same Language Subtitling:  
Literacy Development in India Through Film Songs**



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## SUMMARY

India's efforts in basic primary and adult education are turning an increasing number of non-literates into semi- and neo-literates. But due to a serious lack of literacy skill practice opportunities, many relapse into illiteracy. Same Language Subtitling refers to the idea of subtitling television and/or film programmes in the “same” language as the audio (e.g., Hindi programmes subtitled in Hindi). This paper proposes the use of SLS in the enormously popular film-song-based programmes on state and private television networks, as a subliminal way to integrate literacy skill practice into people’s everyday television viewing. Film songs are the core of Indian popular culture, offering a unique opportunity to strengthen audio-text associations. The main advantages, which do not exist in regular dialogue, is that songs are inherently repetitive and people subconsciously anticipate song phrases.

An appropriate format for subtitling song-programmes was arrived at. Sample SLSed songs were shown to impromptu audiences in Ahmedabad city slums, at the railway station, and some villages in Gujarat. Overt evidence of reading, such as lip movement, was recorded on video camera. The subtitling format chosen drew few objections; interference with the visuals, if any, was not problematic. Audience feedback confirmed that SLS invites reading. The technique does not compromise entertainment but enhances it, thus, making it useful for both the literate and the partially literate. Enhanced entertainment results from SLS because it offers viewers an opportunity to sing along and know the song lines. SLS gives definition to poorly audible sound common in group viewing situations and/or a noisy ambience. The deaf and hearing impaired would benefit especially. Considering the social and entertainment gains, SLS is extremely inexpensive and easily implemented on television and films.

## **Same Language Subtitling: Literacy Development in India Through Film Songs**

Brij Kothari

*“Gammat sathē gnan!”*

(“It’s knowledge with entertainment” -- a woman from Aniyarigaon, Gujarat)

### **Introduction**

Rapidly approaching the year 2000, India still suffers under the weight of one-third of the world’s non-literates. The low levels of literacy, both in terms of rate and quality, is to a great degree maintained by frequent relapse into illiteracy or stagnation of semi- and neo-literates’ skills. Thus, many short stints in school and adult literacy programmes are wasted because they very often fail to push its participants above the minimum threshold of learning. But what happens within the classroom is not as much the topic of this article as what could happen outside of it. A key factor responsible for India’s slow progress with literacy is infrequent reading outside the class-room, sometimes due to a lack of opportunity and/or individual motivation but more significantly due to the absence of a reading environment. Television, which is rapidly making inroads into rural and urban homes, is a medium that could dramatically alter this bleak scenario by building an inviting environment for reading, an environment which creates reading opportunity and motivates.

Same Language Subtitling (SLS) is a technique that holds enormous potential to create such a reading environment, far beyond what text already exists on television. Simply, it suggests subtitling motion media programmes in the “same” language (Kothari, forthcoming). Thus, Hindi programmes would be subtitled in Hindi and likewise with all the regional language programmes in the country. The basic idea is, what you see (text) is what you hear (audio). This article contends that SLS’s strength lies in the incidental learning processes it would launch in the everyday lives of children as well as adults, across the nation. For SLS to contribute to literacy skill acquisition and improvement, there is no better context than film song programmes that already exist in most regional languages.

Film songs pervade the popular culture ethos in India like no other music (Arora 1986). Film-song programmes command regular and extremely high viewership. They attract people from all walks of life, including large numbers of school going children and adults with developing or partially developed literacy skills. In everyday life many of them will not be able to afford reading material and/or be motivated enough to find time for reading. However, watching television and film-song-programmes have become an integral part of people’s lives in today’s rural and urban India and will continue to dominate popular culture. This report argues that SLS, when used in popular culture, can create entertainment which invites reading. The technique is simple and inexpensive and

according to audience feedback, it promises to be generally popular.

The literature is replete with studies that have argued for the appropriate use of subtitling in language learning (Lambert 1986; Holobow *et al.* 1984 and Vanderplank 1988, 1990). Few, however, have explored the possibility of merging subtitling with popular culture and not educational programmes specifically. Lambert (1986, p. 499) suggests from experimental studies in language learning that adding English script to educational television programs that normally have English dialogue only would help literacy. According to him, "For those with English as their only language but who are poor readers, poor spellers or illiterate in English, this simple addition could become a valuable aid over time, not only for improving literacy and reading abilities, but also for enhancing and enriching listeners' general comprehension of verbal information." A plethora of studies on closed-captioning,<sup>2</sup> which was originally implemented to aid the hearing impaired and deaf (Koskinen *et al.* 1986, Carney and Verlinde 1987), have suggested how it could be useful in second-language acquisition, reading improvement (Koskinen *et al.* 1985; Bean and Wilson 1989), listening comprehension development (Froehlich 1988), vocabulary enrichment (Neuman and Koskinen 1992), and even speaking performance (Borras and Lafayette 1994).

### Context for implementation

The proposed context for the implementation of SLS is the proliferation of vastly popular Indian language film-song programmes on *Doordarshan* and other private television networks. For example, nationally, SLS could be used in programmes like *Chitrahaar* and *Rangoli* and state-wise, in the different regional languages (e.g., Gujarati *Chitrageet* and so on). The rapidly increasing access to and viewership of TV is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Access to TV for all age groups, Jan. 1997 (All figures in million)**

TV Viewers	Urban	Rural	Total
Access to TV at Home	173	123	296
Watching at Other Places	47	105	152
Total	220	228	448

Population 930  
TV Homes 57.7

Source: <http://www.nfdcindia.com/view.html>

According to its internet home page (<http://www.nfdcindia.com/doordarshan.html>): "*Doordarshan* has an estimated viewership of 415 million people including both viewers having home TV sets and otherwise. In the last four years a number of commercial

<sup>2</sup> Closed-captioning is an option implemented in technology whereby all television sets 13" or larger sold in the U.S. after July, 1993, have the ability to decode the captions, enabling viewers to switch the captions on or off. Closed-captioning is done for network, cable, and syndicated programming by The National Captioning Institute, a non-profit corporation. Daily, about 100 hours of captioned television programmes are shown on national television in the U.S. (Jensema *et al.* 1996, p. 285). Closed-captioning is not necessarily in the same language although much of it is in the U.S.; it is "closed" because the viewer has control over whether it should be displayed or not. SLS is therefore open-captioning with emphasis on the text matching the audio word for word.

satellite channels have made an entry into Indian homes through various Cable TV network. But *Doordarshan* has maintained more than 85% of the total viewership.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, *Doordarshan* virtually monopolises viewership in rural areas where reading opportunities are lacking and literacy levels are low. And even in pockets where reading opportunities exist, it is found that people are more inclined to make time for television than they are for reading.

### **Subliminal literacy skill development and enhanced entertainment**

Going by the findings, one thing that appropriate SLS is not likely to do is meet with any significant resistance from viewers whether they be literate or partially literate.<sup>3</sup> Both the categories of people will have something to gain, either in the form of entertainment or reading practice opportunity, or both. The twofold rationale for the use of SLS is that it can:

- “add” entertainment value to already popular song programmes; and as a consequence,
- contribute to the development of literacy skills, nationally.

Only when reading itself becomes a part and parcel of everyday life, without necessarily becoming a consciously laborious effort, will many semi- and neo-literates graduate to irreversible literacy. SLS of film-song programmes does that by making literacy skill development a subliminal process through the association of text and song lyrics. This will sub-consciously strengthen weak grapheme-phoneme bonds which are typically weak among the partially literate. Songs have a natural advantage over dialogue in that people know them by heart to varying degrees and repetition is an inherent aspect. This is crucial in enabling people with even extremely low levels of literacy to benefit from SLS. Furthermore, even the totally non-literate and especially pre-school children would benefit. Studies dating from the sixties, many of which are referenced in Peters (1979, p. 409) and more recently (cited in Neuman and Koskinen 1993, p.383) have established that pre-schoolers and children can and do begin to recognise, read, and understand words by being exposed to text on television, without any formal instruction. Thus, there is strong reason to believe that SLS in song programmes would also contribute greatly to preparing the ground for a pre-schooler’s future as a literate individual. It would complement her/his education outside the classroom and help even if s(he) is not enrolled in school.

Will the neo-literates read the SLS rather than watch the pictures? d’Ydewalle (1991; p. 652) has demonstrated with an eye-movement registration method that people are naturally drawn to read subtitles, i.e., if they’re there and intelligible, they will be read. Commenting on teletext, Vanderplank (1988; p. 280) argues that “the presence of text does not reduce television watching to text reading + pictures, but that learners continue to try and match sound and text, and indeed try to monitor the correctness of their own match.” But to derive any measurable benefit in language learning, he cautions, “subjects

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<sup>3</sup> Guidelines on subtitling can be obtained from the author.



who watched sub-titled programmes needed to *take out* language” (Vanderplank 1990: p. 228). In the context of songs it is argued that subjects would need to “*take out*” song lyrics in order to benefit. This is likely to occur given the pervasive interest in film songs. The high motivation among Indians to memorise song lyrics is well-known, what with song-games like *Antakshari* having been around for generations and further popularised on television.

Will SLS benefit the already irreversibly literate? Yes, because the literate, as much as the neo-literate, will enjoy singing along or know the song lyrics. In viewing situations of poor sound, group and/or ambience noise, people would still be able to follow the songs. Therefore, it is crucial to not view SLS as an “educational” initiative alone. Then the idea ceases to have any value for the literate and casting it as such, underplays the entertainment factor. Discounting its entertainment value is to also discount its literacy potential. In other words, SLS can succeed only because it makes song programmes more entertaining for the majority. Learning promises to be a by-product of enhanced entertainment and therein lies a central aspect of the real potential of this simple technique.

Having argued for SLS’s potential, we now turn our attention to a series of pilot studies conducted in Gujarat to explore audience reactions to the idea. The findings of the present research confirm that people actually do read the lyrics to varying degrees and at different times during the song. If this should occur regularly during the plethora of song-programmes on television, literacy skill development at a national level can be expected to be phenomenal.

### **Methodology**

The main objective of the pilot studies discussed here, conducted over three months, was to investigate the following questions: Do people read or at least try to read subtitles on their own, i.e., without any prompting? Do they like the idea of SLS, and if so, what benefit do they see in it? What bothers viewers about SLS, either the idea itself and/or the format chosen? Should song programmes on *Doordarshan* include SLS? The objective was not to be able to comment conclusively on the degree to which people’s reading abilities and or literacy skills could improve. While this remains a long-term objective of the project, it will be explored only after arrangements can be made for sustained showing of SLSed programmes over a period of one year at least.

Eight sites were chosen for field testing with an idea to cover urban slums, rural villages, a school, and a general city area. In the order in which the testing was done, these were: i) With three sweepers at IIM, Ahmedabad; ii) Gulbai Tekra slum, Ahmedabad; iii) Vastrapur slum, Ahmedabad; iv) Viramgaon; v) Gandhigram railway station, Ahmedabad; vi) Godavigaon village; vii) Aniyarigaon; viii) Gram Panchayat Primary School, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad; and ix) School for Deaf-Mutes, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad. In half the places there was no prior information given or arrangements made. In places where prior contact was established, the local organisers were simply told

that some videos would be shown and audience feedback recorded on video. Neither the idea of showing song programmes or subtitles was shared from beforehand. With some variation, the following steps were followed:

Step 1	Show one or two Gujarati songs from Chitrageet with subtitles.	Observe and video record signs of reading/singing along.
Step 2	Ask people to identify the programme. Ask whether it was any different from what <i>Doordarshan</i> showed them.	Video record questions and responses.
Step 3	Once the difference is established, ask who liked the idea of writing below and then, who didn't.	Video record questions and responses.
Step 4	As appropriate, ask individually what hindrance or benefit was introduced by the subtitles.	Video record questions and responses.
Step 5	Show subtitled Hindi film songs. Ask audience to sing along.	Observe and video record signs of reading/singing along.
Step 6	Show the entire video recording back to the audience.	

## Findings

There is absolutely no doubt that, at least in an experimental setting, people enthusiastically and overwhelmingly supported the idea of SLS. This, despite our conscious attempts to also seek negative responses. Leading questions were asked, such as, "Who didn't like the subtitling?" or "There must be someone here who didn't like it?" At times one even tried to persuade the audience by saying, "You better tell us now if you didn't like it otherwise you'll be stuck with it forever since we will merely convey your comments to *Doordarshan* and so it is important to speak your mind now." But as the responses from each place will make clear, people generally responded positively. The rare resistance to the idea was not strong enough to make any serious impression on the others present. In order to convey the reactions of the viewers as closely as possible, we have chosen to document them in the Appendix as translated quotes. The original responses are available on video. Leaving the original recording intact, an edited video of the meaningful responses has been made and may be viewed as a complement to this report, in which, it is difficult to capture the enthusiasm generated for SLS.

## Benefits

It is amply clear from the responses that most people to whom SLS of song programmes was shown, appreciated the idea. Many could only articulate that they liked it but a significant number of people were able to provide a reason. Below is a list of the range of perceived benefits of SLS categorised as being: a) entertaining, b) educational, c) of service to special interest groups, namely, the deaf or hard of hearing, d) socially beneficial, and e) useful for audio-related problems. With SLS one can:

### Entertaining

- sing along; it's fun to do so
- know everything that is being sung
- learn (memorise) the song

- write the song
- clarify doubts about wording
- understand the dialogue in a play, serial, or picture

#### Educational

- learn to read; learn to read faster; try to read
- teach how to read
- practice reading
- learn another language, especially when the unknown language and script are closely related to the known one (e.g., Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, etc.)
- gain knowledge of letters
- know the language better
- improve spelling
- increase vocabulary
- improve writing
- learn by repetition
- find mistakes on TV and write to *Doordarshan*

#### Service to special interest groups

- benefit the hard of hearing or the deaf
- be spared some humiliation, especially if one is hard of hearing and has to constantly ask someone for explanations

#### Socially beneficial

- generate demand for literacy
- encourage educational and/or literacy-linked interaction among parents, family members and children
- contribute to the literacy campaign by benefiting the partially literate
- benefit even the non-literate
- create reading practice opportunities where time and/or interest for reading is lacking
- improve language to enable one to read the newspaper and others' letters

#### Useful for audio-related problems

- read the strip and manage to hear even when there is an audio problem
- listen at low volume if it disturbs someone and still follow what's going on

It was pointed out on occasion that SLS should come on *Doordarshan* (versus other channels since most people watch *Doordarshan*), it should be in Gujarati (even if it is not available in Hindi) and be available in villages (even if it is not available in the cities). At the School for Deaf-Mutes, it was learnt that SLS could be useful in several ways to the deaf-mutes. It could be useful in enriching their vocabulary, which tends to be limited. Those who have some hearing but are clinically deaf were the most excited students at the school, possibly because SLS gave the sounds better definition. While the benefits, which were often repeated, far out-weigh the occasionally mentioned problems with SLS, it is

nevertheless instructive to document the latter.

### *Concerns*

A woman felt that the writing was going away too fast but still felt that it should be there as it provided an opportunity to sing along. A man held that writing should not appear since a “song is for hearing and enjoying. Reading and writing is not going on.” Another respondent opined that serials and pictures are a better context for SLS: unlike songs, here there is something to understand.

Only at Gandhigram Railway Station, in Ahmedabad, did viewers voice a concern over the size of the letters. Someone rightly pointed out that the Gujarati letters were bigger than the writing in Hindi. The ensuing discussion on size led to the opinion among the by-standers that the Hindi size was more appropriate. However, this opinion was not consistently obtained and the size of the lettering was thought to be appropriate in both cases. When prompted to react to the fact that the writing might be cutting the picture, a respondent still supported SLS by saying, “when picture is cut, it is only 10% and we can manage with it because the writing should be there, the advantage is a lot.” Was there a problem of double-vision caused by the introduction of writing? Many who were asked this question claimed that they could read and watch the picture at the same time. However, some did mention that it caused split attention, e.g., “When someone reads the writing he/she can’t see *Chitrahaar* and if someone tries to watch *Chitrahaar*, he/she can’t read.”

### **Conclusion**

Based on the field tests, this report strongly argues for implementing SLS in the context of songs. It should be implemented, not overtly branded as an “educational” programme, but, marketed as a strategy that enhances people’s entertainment. This would be necessary precisely because one would not wish to undermine its literacy potential. SLS promises to provide enormous social returns on relatively modest investment (especially when compared to the huge sums spent by individual districts and states, under the aegis of the National Literacy Mission, on Post-Literacy Campaigns and programmes). SLS’s greatest potential lies in the simplicity of the idea. Intuitively it has been found to appeal to most people. And perhaps this is why at least a few children in every field test were found to be lip-reading the subtitles on their own, even before anybody’s attention was explicitly drawn upon the writing. How many more were reading in their minds is anybody’s guess but it is likely that semi- and neo-literates are likely to do so. It is a fair assumption that the person who has recently picked up a skill will have an innate drive to practice it, whether the skill is riding a bicycle or it is literacy.

Whether SLS can be implemented on national and state television is a policy decision. With *Prasar Bharati* advocating greater local autonomy, Doordarshan Kendras are in a better position in the present climate to experiment with the idea. Certain hesitations that can be anticipated in policy makers’ will to experiment include: i) film

songs are an inappropriate (read 'vulgar') medium to promote literacy; ii) video clips are often available at the last moment cutting into the lead time necessary for subtitling; iii) song-programmes are revenue generating, making decision-makers averse to experimentation; and finally, iv) who is to bear the cost of subtitling?

Admittedly, film songs are a mixed bag -- ranging from the poetic to the risqué. But subtitling would hardly change that. SLS or not, if the popular song programmes are shown, people will watch them. The question from a moral point of view is, thus, not whether we should use film songs for literacy but whether we should be showing them at all? It is a contradiction to be doing the latter and objecting to its use for a social good.

The availability of song clips with enough lead time (typically 48 hrs. is sufficient) is a management issue and can be enforced easily. But even if this is not desirable, there is no harm in subtitling only the songs that do become available well in advance. In fact, it creates a good scenario for viewers to compare and contrast SLSed vs. un-subtitled songs and send in their feedback.

Regarding the concern that sponsors may not support the subtitling idea, the answer lies in viewer feedback. It has been argued based on the field tests that both the literate and the partially literate have something to gain from SLS. Knowing song lyrics and being able to sing along is a significant form of entertainment enhancement.

Finally, the cost of subtitling is a critical issue. During an experimental phase, SLS services for song programmes in any language are offered to Doordarshan Kendras willing to test the idea. How do we make it sustainable? One way would be to offer the viewers, printed lyrics of all the songs in a programme, for a price (e.g., Rs. 15/-). However, if the literacy gains are proven to be substantial, national and international organisations involved in adult education and literacy development can be persuaded to take up the activity as a service to the television networks and Doordarshan production centres, similar to the National Captioning Institute's non-commercial services to the networks in the U.S. (Jensema *et al.* 1996). The services can further expand to other suitable programmes, such as cartoons watched by many children, and not be restricted to film songs. Film songs, nevertheless, provides the most fertile ground for experimentation with SLS. And experiment we must, if there is to be progress.

## Appendix

### Box 1: Three sweepers at IIM, Ahmedabad

- 1) "These words that are coming one can write the song. Children can know about words if it's written. Otherwise they just see the hero or scene. If they can remember the hero they can also remember the words. If the father asks the child what is written, then he/she can quickly read it and let him know."
- 2) "Personally we benefit because we can write the words of the song we like: it's fun reading the words."
- 3) "If it's written we can sing along."
- 4) "We can't write the song while watching but we can remember the words and write the song better. Whatever we can't write we can complete with the help of a tape-recorder or radio."
- 5) "If we've read it then it stays in the mind."
- 6) "We know that the line will disappear fast so we learn it by-heart and become prepared for the next line."
- 7) Dialogue  
Q. If every song came with a unique number and you could write to *Doordarshan* to get the words of the song, would you do it?  
"Yes."

### Box 2: Gulbai Tekra slum, Ahmedabad

- 1) Woman  
"The strip was going so soon, I couldn't read everything."  
So should we not put the strip?  
"No. It should be there."  
What will be the benefit?  
"With what's written one can understand that that is the song. Otherwise we don't know what is being sung. If it's written then one can know the whole song, one can learn the song and one can read the song."
- 2) The writing should come or not?  
"Yes it should come. We will learn the song. We can also sing together."
- 3) "One who doesn't know the song can read and know the whole song."
- 4) Should we put the writing or not?  
"You should. It is very important."
- 5) Were you reading or seeing the movie?  
"I was reading and seeing at the same time."
- 6) "Someone who doesn't know how to read, can learn. If someone knows, he/she can teach someone else."
- 7) "We will benefit by exercising our reading. We like it because we can read and listen."

**Box 3: Vastrapur Slum, Ahmedabad**

1) Girl studying in class V.

"I like it because when someone says something, I don't understand everything. If it's written then one can know completely."

2) "If someone wants to write the song, he/she can write."

3) "One who can't hear well, can read." Another person reiterated this.

4) A Gujarati person can know how the writing is in Hindi and a Hindi person can know the writing in Gujarati. -- Abstracted from underlying meaning, not a quote.

5) You are all Gujarati, do you also want it in Hindi? Why?

"Because Hindi is our national language."

6) Who was finding it difficult to read?

"Even the person who can't read, will also benefit. It will get set in the mind that this is being said and this is being written. He/she will slowly learn."

7) Do you find any problem if we write?

"No. There are two advantages. Firstly, one can read and write. Secondly, the one who speaks Hindi, if he/she reads Gujarati, he/she will gain knowledge of the language. And if the Gujarati speaker reads Hindi, then he/she will gain knowledge of Hindi."

**Box 4: Viramgaon**

1) "The words written below give information about the song. If you want to sing, you can sing along." -- Dasarath-bhai Daya-bhai Dalvadi

2) "The words written on the screen can contribute to the literacy campaign run by the government. People who are non-literate, who can read a little bit, can benefit by seeing the writing with the picture."

**Box 5: Gandhigram railway station**

1) "When someone doesn't know a part of the song, he/she can know the song and sing along."

2) "The person who can't hear well, he/she can read and understand what song is being shown."

3) "Shouldn't be written, I think, because the song is for hearing and enjoying. Reading and writing is not going on."

4) "The song being shown, not everyone can understand. If it is written, he/she can understand which word is coming, what it's meaning is. Sometimes what happens is that the song keeps playing and the person keeps watching but not knowing what is being said. If it's written, he/she will read and know what's what."

5) "There's a song, 'Aap jaisaa koi meri zindagi mein aye, to baat ban jaye'. Now is it 'baat ban jaye' or 'baap ban jaye'? If it's written one can know that that is the word."

6) "Picture is cut, a little bit, about 10%. But when picture is cut, it is only 10% and we can manage with it because writing should be there, the advantage is a lot."

- 7) "If there's an audio problem, you can watch the strip below and read."
  - 8) "Those who can read either Hindi or Gujarati a little bit, they can see the strip and try to read. With this they can learn to read Hindi fast."
  - 9) "By making the writing available, people will gain knowledge of letters and know the language better."
  - 10) "In my opinion this should not happen. There's not much of a disadvantage but when someone reads the writing, he/she can't see *Chitrahaar* and if someone tries to watch *Chitrahaar*, he/she can't read."
  - 11) "People like to listen to songs. They don't pay attention to the words. But if it's a play or a serial or a picture, then the writing should be there, because, for these one needs to understand. By reading, what's being said can be understood immediately. Many times one doesn't understand the dialogue but if it's written then this becomes easy."
- "The enjoyment of a song that is in hearing is not in writing. There is nothing to understand in a song, what one likes is that it pleases the ear."
- 12) "For people who don't speak the language, such as when a Marathi speaker who knows a little bit of Hindi and Gujarati and watches the writing, he/she can try to understand the words."
  - 13) "The writing in Hindi is OK but will it do if the Gujarati writing were slightly smaller?"
  - 14) "Some meanings are very 'awkward'. If it's written then we know."
  - 15) "If someone can't hear, then he/she will read." Three other people said similarly.

**Box 6: Godavigaon (on route to Nal Sarovar)**

- 1) "The song that is sung, if the words are written below then one can know the song. Even children can know that this song is being sung. In *Doordarshan* nothing is written so how can one know what is being sung? We can know somewhat by watching but how can the children know?"
- 2) "For the deaf they have sign language on TV but it is difficult to understand. If it were written, they can read and understand everything."
- 3) "Lines are repeated so it is not too fast."
- 4) "One who doesn't know how to read very well can make the effort to read. It could be very useful for them."
- 5) Old woman who can't read Hindi saw the song "Hawa-hawai" and said that she could follow a little bit what was written because it was repeated.
- 6) "You're asking whether this should be written on our TV? No, *Doordarshan* doesn't do it. We should all get together and write to them."
- 7) "Little children can read and learn easily. Also, if the sound disturbs, then if it's written one can simply follow at low volume." Asked if it was distracting and if it created double vision, he replied, "This is not a problem because both come together. One's attention or vision is on both together."
- 8) "If the letters are smaller in Hindi then those who have difficulty reading will find it too small."



- 9) "What is being said is understood clearly."
- 10) "If it's written, one knows what they want to say."
- 11) "If it's written, one knows that this song is coming or this bhajan."  
Doesn't it create double vision? "No." An onlooker. "The writing is clear."  
But doesn't it create double vision? "No. only if you don't have your spectacles!"
- 12) "The vision is one only. Reading and sight happen simultaneously, they 'catch up'"
- 13) "If one doesn't understand something, then by writing one can understand."
- 14) School going child  
"One who can't listen well, it can be for him/her. One who is less educated, it can be useful for him/her. Whatever we don't get, one can just watch below and know."
- 15) School going child  
"With the writing below, the person can understand that this is being said."
- 16) "One who can't read much, will try to read more. It will be very useful for him/her"
- 17) "If someone is hearing-impaired, he/she can also read and understand."
- 18) "People who are deaf and dumb, like me who can't hear well, can read and know. If you ask someone on the side, people make fun of me but if it's written then I can read."
- 19) "Also adults will try to read and understand. Those who can't hear well."

**Box 7: Aniyarigaon**

- 1) A semi-literate woman who read "janmo janamna saath re" very haltingly.  
"If the words are there then we know. On TV this doesn't come and they only show the song but you are showing the words also. What's written should come. If someone important writes to *Doordarshan* then they will show."
- 2) "If one reads in a running programme then one can learn a lot."
- 3) Woman --  
"If you don't show this in cities it's OK but in villages you should put the writing so we know. If it's written in pictures then people can try to write what's written."
- 4) "This should come on *Doordarshan* and not on other channels since most of us watch *Doordarshan*. Doesn't matter if you put or don't put in Hindi but you should put in Gujarati programmes."
- 5) Who all find it problematic or difficult to read or feel they have double vision?  
"No problem", in chorus.
- 6) "All those who are educated will read. And those who are not very educated will ask someone, 'what is this written?'. Someone or the other will tell the words."
- 7) A child who was visibly trying to read was asked if it was difficult to read and watch at the same time. He replied, "I was watching and reading. Someone like me who doesn't know how to read in Hindi (but

can in Gujarati) can learn.”

8) Woman --

“This song that comes, because you will try to read and see at the same time, one will learn, no?”

9) “One who can read will read, otherwise what else can he/she do? But one thing can happen. One who is not literate can feel, ‘my life has gone but my child’s future should not be wasted’. By watching this he/she may want to make at least his/her child literate, that he/she should study and not look for work.”

10) Dialogue with someone who attended the adult literacy programmes:

“We make many spelling mistakes but if we got a chance to see this writing regularly then we will learn fast.”

Q. In the four months since the adult literacy classes ended, did you try to read or write?

“Nothing, my time was spent on farming.”

Q. But during the farming season, you didn’t try to read or write?

“I read, once in a while when our teacher gave some book but I don’t get much time for this.”

Q. Do you find time to watch TV?

“Yes, I see TV in the morning and evening.”

Q. You get time to watch TV but not for reading, is that right?

“Where will I get time? In the morning I have to go to the field.”

Q. So if there is some writing on TV, will it help you?

“Yes! Do put this writing, it is needed.”

11) Adult literacy trainer

“Yes, this writing will help since the same word is repeated many times. Even difficult words people can learn. People watch TV so this will become an everyday subject. People are willing to leave any work to watch a serial. If writing comes below then there will definitely be an effect on the child, his/her reading will become faster.”

12) Woman

“If a woman is doing dishes, she will stop when her programme comes. But she has no time for reading since she is either busy at home or in the field. You see yourself on Sundays, when their special programme comes, they will leave work which gives them Rs. 50-60 and watch their programme.”

“If there is something to read on a daily basis then there is going to be a difference. In a week the same song may come twice. So if it’s written then the person can remember. And if in future the person has to write it, he/she can.”

13) Do you like the idea of writing on programmes of entertainment?

“Yes. It’s knowledge with entertainment.”

14) “If this writing comes on *Doordarshan*, then we can tell *Doordarshan* what mistakes they are making in their writing.”

15) About four people said that they get education (*shikshan*).

16) Where should this writing come, on *Doordarshan* or elsewhere?

“Of course on *Doordarshan* because we all watch *Doordarshan* only. Doesn’t matter if it comes or not in Hindi, but definitely give it Gujarati programmes.”

17) “If somebody is deaf, he/she can’t hear. But if it’s written then he/she can read, no?”

18) Will it do if the letters are smaller?

"No. This size is required."

Other person. "One who sees poorly and one who has difficulty reading, won't be able to read well. If they were bigger, it would be better."

19) School going child who was trying to read on his own.

Were you reading or watching?

"I was reading and watching at the same time. I don't know Hindi but I was able to read a little bit."

So should we have this writing?

"One who can't read will try to read like me. And one who can, will try to teach someone."

20) Is it OK if we don't put the writing?

"No. It must come!"

**Box 8: Gram Panchayat Primary School, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad**

1) "I was reading and watching at the same time. The song says, '*Chundari udi udi jaya*' and that's what's written."

Q. And what happens by reading the song?

"One can read and remember."

2) What do you remember by reading?

"One can remember which word is written how."

3) "One can learn the song and copy in the notebook. If it's written and we read then if someone asks we know."

4) "I know how to read but I can learn individual words and write them."

5) Q. What happens by reading?

"One can learn the song and if one knows how to read a little bit then one can quickly learn to read fast, like myself."

6) "We can learn the song: when we want to sing, we can sing along; if someone makes us read, we can read also."

7) "One can memorise the song."

8) "If someone doesn't know how to read Hindi, he/she can learn. When someone asks if I can read Hindi then I can quickly say 'yes!'."

9) "One can learn Hindi and teach someone else."

10) "If one doesn't know Hindi then one can learn and read letters for others and explain."

11) "If one knows a little bit (Hindi) then one can watch and learn fully."

12) "If the neighbour gets a letter then one can read it. When Hindi newspaper comes, one can read it and know what's going on in the country and improve one's Hindi reading. And if someone doesn't know, one can find his/her mistakes and teach."

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