



Attaining the MDGs in India
The Role of Public Policy and Service Delivery
Conference Delhi, 17/18 June 2004

**BOLLYWOOD, TELEVISION AND SAME LANGUAGE SUBTITLING (SLS):
A PANACEA OR SUGAR PILL FOR INDIA'S MASSIVE LITERACY
CHALLENGE?**

“Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown” is the perfect movie for doctoral candidates doing their utmost to avoid dissertation writing. On that occasion in January 1996, Brij Kothari and some of his friends were also trying to improve their half-baked Spanish by watching the Pedro Almodóvar classic. They all found it quite hard to follow the original dialogue in Spanish. A woman in the group was on the verge of giving birth. The English subtitles were doing nothing to reduce anyone’s labor pains. In fact they made it harder to ‘hear’ the Spanish dialogue. The air of birth and Kothari’s inability to ignore the English subtitles led to two careless comments that fused in a moment of conception: “If only they would subtitle the Spanish dialogue in Spanish and not translate”. Pause. “And if they simply subtitled Hindi films in Hindi, on TV, India would become literate.” Longer pause. “Maybe you’re on to something,” chimed in a friend, before Almodóvar’s magic threw everyone into peals of laughter. The moment was captured, though.

A year later, the Same Language Subtitling (SLS)^{1 2} project was born, surviving Kothari’s transition from grad school to professional life and a continental relocation. The Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA) offered him a job, an institutional home for SLS at its Ravi J. Matthai Center for Educational Innovation (RJMCEI), and seed funding of \$650 for R&D.

¹ The SLS core team included, at different times: Hemlata Jadwani, Ashok Joshi, Seema Khanwalkar, Nirav Shah, and Tathagat Chakravarty, who continued to contribute immensely to the project. With some discomfort, the author wrote himself in as a protagonist at Dr. Velamuri’s request, in keeping with a typical teaching case. The reader should, however, bear in mind that SLS continued to be a team effort.

² Acronyms used in this case are given in **Exhibit 5**.

This case was prepared by Brij Kothari, Associate Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, Ravi J. Matthai Center for Educational Innovation. It was written during a fellowship at Stanford University, under the Reuters Foundation Digital Vision Program. The present version is based on a written case, sponsored by the World Bank, for the purpose of discussion in an educational context. It has benefited greatly from the comments of Dr. S. Ramakrishna Velamuri at IESE.

SLS, the idea of subtitling motion media in the same language as the audio for mass literacy, was so incredibly simple that it instantly had an immensely powerful appeal for Kothari. But its simplicity also raised some instinctive reactions:

- 1) “How could such a simple intervention make any difference to the massive problem of illiteracy in India?” After all it had, for several decades, been the country with one-third the world’s non-literate people – roughly 300 million, officially, since 1961.
- 2) The national apex body for literacy efforts was the National Literacy Mission (NLM). An idea for lifelong reading practice as simple as SLS, thought Kothari, just needed to be shared with the top policy brass at NLM or the “right” people in the Education Department at the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). Surely, such a powerful idea would be of interest and worthy of a research-based pilot. Depending on the results, one could quickly move toward broad-based implementation, nationally and in individual states. What made Kothari think the NLM would be interested?

The NLM had obtained a fair bit of recognition for changing millions of people, district by district around the country, from non-literate to literate. Its flagship innovation was the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC; see Athreya and Chunkath, 1996).

The subtitling idea was born at a time when the limitations of the TLC were well-known. The TLC was a good instrument to interest people in literacy and get them to take their first steps in that direction. But the NLM did not enjoy the same success in its strategies to keep people on the path to achieving functional literacy, beyond incipient skills (Kothari, 2003).

The NLM was aware that retention and improvement of literacy skills was an important challenge, but it did not have effective strategies to meet this challenge. The subtitling idea was ideal for retention, practice and lifelong improvement of reading skills. The synergy with ongoing national efforts that succeeded in creating a large number of early literates seemed apparent. The NLM was expected to grab the SLS and run with it, or at least facilitate a pilot with rigorous research.

- 3) “Surely, if the idea was so very simple, it must have been tried somewhere on TV for first language literacy. And if it had worked, it would have already been on TV in India and elsewhere.” It was the end of the 20th century, and the romance with television and radio as mass media for education was pretty much over, at least in terms of fundamental breakthroughs. The search for breakthroughs in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Development (or ICT4D) did not automatically imply television and radio anymore but almost invariably, the use of computers. Television and radio by now seemed passé in their ability to create unexplored promise for development. In India, television was not forgotten for literacy but its purpose was primarily to motivate people to become literate through slick ads.
- 4) For an idea relating to literacy, approaching the NLM or MHRD and its Department of Education seemed the most logical step. The obvious partner to implement the idea was Doordarshan, India’s state broadcaster, since it had the maximum reach in rural areas. But how many early literate people, the target viewers of SLS, actually had access to television?

- 5) What kind of programming was most suitable for SLS? Bollywood, or film-based content, had dominated television programming in India for a while. From an early reader's perspective, programs that were easiest to read along with were the ubiquitous film song programs, in every language and state. Like few other genres in entertainment, film songs gave rise to passion across India, irrespective of age, class, caste, religion, sex, and occupation. One could say it was a unique resource unifying one of the most diverse countries in the world.
- 6) SLS was low-cost and low-risk for the broadcaster since all that was required was to add subtitles to an existing program, already popular on TV. The cost of adding subtitles was less than 1% of the funds for literacy programs in any state dedicated to the retention and lifelong improvement of skills. Potentially, SLS offered far more practice and improvement in reading skills, and on a much larger scale, than what was being achieved by the remaining 99% of funds. A broadcaster could easily try it out on any song program for a few episodes, review its impact from ratings and viewer feedback, and discontinue if necessary. The risk was minimal. The possibility of improved ratings was real.

When Kothari initiated the SLS project in early 1997, the following questions loomed large:

- a) If SLS were implemented on film song programs on TV, would it be popular among viewers?
- b) Would SLS contribute to literacy and how? How would this change for viewers with different abilities ranging from non to full literacy?
- c) Would SLS contribute to reading abilities among school children?
- d) Was the idea of SLS for literacy new and/or innovative? Why or why not?
- e) Was the choice of subtitling film songs the best? What were some other viable programming types?
- f) Strategically, what would be the best way to get SLS from concept to air in India? In other words, which policy-making body or group could be approached for quick implementation followed by long-term institutionalization?
- g) Should one work with the state and/or private broadcasters?
- h) How could the impact of SLS be measured after it went on air?

The Problem: Literacy in India, a Growing Bubble

According to the 2001 Census, India's literacy rate was 65.4% (7+). Officially, the population aged seven and above comprised 562 million literates and 296.2 million non-literates. As Table 1 (**Exhibit 1**) documents, the literacy rate had experienced a dramatic rise in the previous fifty years, from 18.3% in 1951 to 65.4% in 2001. The most significant decadal growth of 12.9% was in the 1990s, mainly due to the TLC efforts of the NLM in

around 450 of India's 593 districts. India, the NLM believed, was expected to reach “a sustainable threshold of 75% literacy by 2006” (NLM 2000).

What did a literacy rate of 65.4% in 2001 actually mean? It was well-known that the enumeration of literacy by the census was nothing more than an individual in every household reporting on behalf of every household member whether she/he was literate. The critical question was, therefore, “What percentage of the 7+ population was literate at what level of literacy?” Neither academics nor policy researchers had explored this question in India, with any seriousness.

A critical look inside the literacy bubble

The SLS project researched this question by commissioning a study from AC Nielsen's ORG-Center for Social Research (Nielsen's ORG-CSR), in five states: Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Gujarat (Nielsen's ORG-CSR, 2003a). The findings were rather shocking. The initial results from this study were comparable to the literacy rate given by the 2001 Census: 68.2% of respondents reported themselves to be literate. However, when asked to read a simple paragraph, only 12% could do so without any difficulty, 36.3% read with a range of difficulty, and 51.7% could not read it at all. The literacy rate dropped by 16.5% when people's reading was tested. At least half the “literate” had considerable room for reading skill improvement. Taking the liberty to project the results nationally, if only for perspective and not precision, India's 7+ population of 858.2 million in 2001 could be said to have approximately 103 million very comfortably literate people, 312 million early literates, and 444 million non-literates. This estimated number of non-literates was significantly higher than the official figure of 296.2 million.

The average formal educational level of the early literates, i.e., those able to read with difficulty, was 5.4. For those found to be non-literate, it was 1 (SD 1.8). The average grade of those who said they could read a newspaper, but with difficulty, was around 5. Thus, to begin operating in a functionally literate manner, under village conditions, a minimum primary education up to Grade 5 was necessary. The average education received in the villages/states covered by the PROBE (1999) report was 2.9 for boys and 1.8 for girls. Even though the all-India Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in primary school education (Grade 1-5) was more than 100%³, less than 60% of those actually beginning primary education persisted until Grade 5, a situation that had improved only marginally over the years (Figure 1, **Exhibit 1**). If primary education was primarily responsible for imparting basic literacy skills, at present quality levels at least 40% of school-going village children would grow up to be functionally non-literate adults.

A crucial reason for poor performance in primary education was the lack of pre-primary preparation. Policy attention to pre-primary education was recent, beginning in the late 1990s (Figure 2, **Exhibit 1**). The most recent all-India figure of 30% pre-primary school enrollment still pointed to the enormous gap in early education planning.

³ GER is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group (6-14 in India) that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Hence, GER can exceed 100%.

Literacy and Television Penetration

The ICT with the strongest rural presence in India was television, and this presence was still growing rapidly (Figure 1, **Exhibit 2**). According to the National Readership Survey, 2002, 383.6 million people had direct access to television in 81.6 million homes⁴. In comparison there were only 189 million radio listeners and six million internet users. Television consumed a 72% share of media time, and access was growing rapidly.

Access to television among people at various levels of literacy was a relevant issue for the SLS project. A literacy level census conducted under the project in eight villages in Gujarat offered a perspective. Among television viewers, the percentage of people at different literacy levels is given in Figure 2 (**Exhibit 2**). TV viewers comprised 33% non-literates, 45% early literates, and 22% fully literate people. Even if one could not generalize nationally on the basis of this picture, it served to challenge a myth that television access was concentrated among the literate. The five-state Nielsen's ORG-CSR (2003a) study offered a startlingly similar confirmation of these proportions in a sample population with a 68.2% literacy rate as shown in Figure 3 (**Exhibit 2**); (if one accepts people with no formal education as non-literate, Grade 1-5 education as early literate and Grade 6+ as fully literate).

Estimating total TV access to be 500 million, SLS could potentially contribute to the reading skills improvement of 215 million (43%) early literates and motivate an additional 170 million (34%) non-literates for literacy. Besides, 115 million (23%) fully literate people could also enjoy singing along to the lyrics.

The Solution: Experiences and Experiments with Same Language Subtitling (SLS)

I. Reactions to SLS (1997)

Several studies had been conducted on SLS since early 1997, and each had strengthened the case for SLS. The first study involved a qualitative assessment of the reactions to SLS in Gujarati and Hindi film songs in a variety of sites in Gujarat, including villages, slums, a primary school, and public places such as a railway station (Kothari, 1998). Kothari and his team would simply start playing subtitled songs at a public place, observe the gathered people's reactions and reading responses, and interview them on video. Overwhelmingly, people had positive things to say for SLS, expressing a range of benefits. SLS was seen as being: a) entertaining, b) educational, c) of service to the deaf and hard of hearing, and d) useful when experiencing audio problems with the TV. Occasionally, the problems of split attention and the words going too fast were mentioned. However, the overall positive reaction to SLS led to a controlled study to understand the impact of SLS, if any, on reading skills.

⁴ Indirect access through neighbors was common, especially in rural areas, and raised total access to roughly 500 million.

II. School Experiment (1998)

In a primary school in Ahmedabad city attended by disadvantaged children, three groups of 46 children each, comparable in terms of reading ability, were created from children in Grades 4-5 (Kothari et al., 2002). Over a period of roughly three months, the Subtitle Group (SG) was shown 30 minutes of Hindi film songs with SLS three times a week. The Without Subtitle Group (WSG) was shown 30 minutes of the same Hindi film songs without subtitles, but with the same weekly frequency, and the third group, a pure Control Group (CG), was not shown anything. All the subjects were tested before and after the three-month period with exactly the same reading test (similar to the one described in Kothari and Joshi, 2002).

Approximately 18 hours of exposure to SLS led automatically, i.e., without further intervention, to greater improvement in the SG as compared to the other two groups. The group's average improvements were statistically significant, implying that improvement was greater in and across the subtitle group and not by chance. Although the average improvement found did not represent, as expected, a dramatic improvement in reading ability through the limited exposure to SLS in the experiment, it supported the observation that people do read the subtitles and this reading over a sustained period of exposure was expected to lead to steady improvements in reading ability for a mass of people.

III. SLS on Television, a Start in Gujarat (1999-2000)⁵

The encouraging outcome of the school experiment paved the way for the first ever implementation of SLS for literacy on TV (Kothari *et al.*, forthcoming, 2004). After a period of stalling and rejection, a fortuitous transfer of a top official at Doordarshan Kendra (DDK)⁶, Ahmedabad, along with his replacement by a more receptive individual, enabled the debut of SLS for literacy on TV⁷. To test the waters, permission was granted to add SLS to four episodes of *Chitrageet*, a popular 30-minute program of Gujarati film songs on DDK, Ahmedabad. In anticipation of a positive response from viewers, before beginning telecasts of *Chitrageet* with SLS, the SLS team conducted a baseline of the literacy skill levels of 1,500 people from several villages and slums.

The selection criteria for inclusion in the SG were: a) early reading ability based on a maximum of 35 alpha-syllables read out of 40 presented, b) not attending formal or non-formal education, and c) moderate-high viewership of *Chitrageet*. Similarly, the WSG was drawn from a village with high cable penetration, where it was found that people generally did not watch *Chitrageet*.

⁵ Funded by Developmental Education and Communication Unit (DECU), Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, and Research and Publications (R&P at IIMA).

⁶ Doordarshan (DD) was the national television network headquartered in New Delhi. As part of this network, every major state had a Doordarshan 'Kendra' (DDK) or 'center' producing and showing regional language programs in addition to relaying programs on the national network.

⁷ The receptive individual was Mr. Satish Saxena, transferred from Rajkot to Ahmedabad as Director, DDK. He deserves a special mention for his willingness to try something new.

Letters received by DDK, Ahmedabad, immediately following the first telecast of *Chitrageet* with SLS provided a strong indication that SLS was popular with the viewers in Gujarat. A reconfirmation was provided with the next three episodes, and a decision was made to continue over a period of six months (June-December, 1999). After a telecast of 25 episodes of *Chitrageet* with SLS, exactly the same post-test of reading skills was administered in December, 1999, to all those in the SG and WSG who could be reached.

The average number of episodes of *Chitrageet* seen over the six-month period was 13, amounting to an SLS exposure of 4.3 hours. Even at this low exposure level, skill improvement was more apparent in the SG than in the WSG. As in the school experiment, the improvement was incremental across the SG as implied by statistical significance.

The qualitative feedback obtained by DDK through postcards to the program confirmed the continued popularity of SLS on *Chitrageet*. To encourage viewer comments to the program, the lyrics of songs were offered. The comments thus generated on SLS helped to convince DDK to repeat telecast the 25 episodes of *Chitrageet* over another six-month period, until June 2000. Repeating was necessary because project funding was insufficient to subtitle new episodes beyond the six-month period. During the repeat telecasts, people writing to the program were offered a booklet (*Chitrageet na Bol*) of the lyrics of all the songs shown in the first 13 episodes. The strategy of offering song lyrics encouraged many viewers to write postcards to the program.

Postcards to Chitrageet and a survey of postcard writers

The range of comments received in the postcards is summarized in Table 1 (**Exhibit 3**). Only three comments (out of 704), directly commenting on subtitling were opposed to the idea. The range of comments on the subtitling's contribution to learning point to its possible contribution to literacy, language learning, and even pronunciation. The first 500 people who wrote to *Chitrageet* after SLS was added were surveyed by post. Of the 353 responses received, only two mentioned not liking SLS. One found SLS to be a distraction and the other found it to be unnecessary. The reasons for liking SLS are presented in Table 2 (**Exhibit 3**). While the link of SLS with literacy was prominent in the minds of viewers, many comments saw SLS as an idea that enhanced the entertainment already derived from song programs. It is beyond the scope of the present case to go into a qualitative analysis of the postcard comments. However, a few of the comments in Box 1 (**Exhibit 3**) illustrate viewers' feelings about SLS.

These comments indicate that SLS encouraged group learning in a family context, helped refresh unpracticed literacy skills, contributed to language learning, complemented ongoing educational efforts and sparked new ones, furthered people's participation in singing activities/competitions, became an educational media resource for those imparting reading/writing skills, provided print exposure and early reading development among pre-school and school-going children, and formed a reading habit. Besides, school principals and teachers also seemed interested in building school-based activities around SLS.

During the second half of SLS's first tenure in Gujarat, an active attempt was made to engage high-ranking officials in the State Literacy Mission and the State Department of Elementary and Continuing Education to take over the subtitling of *Chitrageet* and integrate SLS of television programs as part and parcel of literacy activities in the state. The political establishment was also approached. However, SLS remained an idea and a project that, although first initiated and implemented successfully in Gujarat, had to stop in its birthplace

because of a lack of interest and funds. The funds needed to keep SLS on air on Chitragreet were around \$24,000 per year, when the same year state agencies responsible for literacy were reported to have returned more than ten times that amount to central government agencies funding literacy activities in the state. The other reason why SLS halted with Chitragreet in June 2000 was that the program stopped being an in-house production of DDK. The private producer, although willing to subtitle, demanded a per episode fee for allowing subtitling in addition to the entire cost of subtitling being covered. The strong evidence suggesting that SLS had indeed enhanced the popularity of the program left no justification for a fee to allow subtitling.

IV. Geet Tamara Bol Amara (GTBA)

Even though SLS ended with *Chitragreet*, the experience succeeded in convincing several people at DDK, Ahmedabad that SLS was indeed popular with viewers. To continue the SLS in Gujarat, IIMA and DDK, Ahmedabad decided to try SLS on folk song programming routinely recorded in-house. The agreement was that DDK would produce the program and IIMA would add SLS and pay for the telecast fee in a non-prime-time slot. IIMA could then try and raise ad revenue to meet its telecast and subtitling expenses. In 2001, 13 episodes were created and telecast by DDK, Ahmedabad, and thereafter, it was decided to repeat telecast all of them.

Some new approaches were tried on *Geet Tamara Bol Amara* (GTBA) (Kothari *et al.*, 2003)⁸. A competition was held asking two questions on every episode, one based entirely on the lyrics to encourage reading of the subtitles and the other on an issue of social significance, e.g., “What is the minimum age of marriage for girls?” The repeat telecasts only changed the questions asked on the program. People who sent the correct answers to both the questions received a wall-poster of the lyrics for an episode. One lucky entrant received a radio-cassette recorder as a prize and her/his name was announced on a subsequent program.

The competition encouraged widespread participation from across Gujarat. 6,284 postcards were received from viewers, an average of around 242 postcards per episode. A mail survey of the first 2,000 postcard writers was conducted, with a response rate of 88.3%. Almost all the respondents (90.8%) supported the appearance of SLS, 3.3% did not like it, and the rest did not respond to the question. The reasons for liking SLS are given in Table 3 (**Exhibit 3**). The importance of SLS as an enhancer of entertainment became obvious: nearly 56.7% responses made this link. In comparison, 28.9% responses linked SLS with learning. SLS acted first and foremost as an entertainment enhancer and this happened only through the act of reading along with songs. Those who did not necessarily make the link with learning were, nevertheless, honing their skills subconsciously.

Even though film song programs clearly enjoyed more viewership than folk song programs produced from studio recordings of folk artists, the importance of SLS as a contributor to culture, tradition, and knowledge was more closely associated with the folk genre. The lyrics of folk songs and *bhajans* were obviously easier for people to discuss and share with others. 60% of the lyrics posters ended up on walls at home or in public places, including some in schools. A poster of the lyrics of film songs would most likely not have been displayed so openly.

⁸ Translates as “Your Songs, Our Lyrics”.

The GTBA experience showed that SLS was as well received for folk music as for film songs. People responded and participated actively in TV competitions asking for responses to issues of social concern. In terms of social awareness-raising or sparking home-based conversations around important issues, competitions like those in GTBA were also likely to be effective in film song programs. Despite the studio recording feel of the folk songs in GTBA – essentially artists sitting in a studio and performing against a standard set – it was interesting that with very little marketing effort, the project was able to raise roughly 50% of the telecast and SLS expenses from ad revenue. Thus the possibility of a sustainable folk song program with greater professionalism in production and marketing seemed feasible in different states.

Experiments with SLS on GTBA, as with *Chitrageet*, began and ended in a “project” mode within a stipulated time frame. Several top policy-makers had already been approached over the course of the project, since 1997, in NLM and Gujarat, to mainstream the idea in the state and nationally. However, SLS remained an IIMA-DDK-DECU initiative, none of these institutions having the *locus standi* to persuasively influence state and much less national policy in education and literacy. Despite the encouraging results of experiments in Gujarat, and the popularity of SLS among most viewers, SLS went off the air in Gujarat, its birthplace, with the last telecast of GTBA on August 22, 2001.

At the time, the SLS project had run its course and exhausted all available sources of funding. The numerous national and international agencies that were approached for funding further work with SLS, including the *InfoDev* competition at the World Bank, focusing on ICTs in development, could not be convinced. At *InfoDev*, the project was discussed extensively but perhaps the primary problem was an operational definition of “ICT”. In a worldwide trend in which ICTs automatically imply “computers and digital technologies”, SLS was using television, an old ICT struggling to compete with the sexiness of computer-based technologies. At *InfoDev*, however, a marginalized opinion persuaded by the potential of SLS on television, brought the project closer to its most critical break via timely information on another open competition within the World Bank, Development Marketplace 2002 (DM 2002). The deadline was literally four days away at the time. As luck would have it, a partner institution was identified in Mudra Videotec (a private partner being required by the competition) and an application sent in. On January 10, 2002, the SLS project got the funding it so badly needed to keep the idea alive. DM awards were known to average significantly less than the maximum possible \$250,000 stated in the competition. Yet, the SLS proposal requested and received the maximum possible, whopping by the standards of most grants for individually driven projects in development, yet miniscule in relation to the challenge of making over half a billion people read on a weekly basis.

Now the challenge for Kothari and his team was to put SLS on national TV and measure its impact on literacy skills within a tight one-year DM project cycle. It was imperative that SLS go on air immediately, especially if literacy effects were to be measurable.

V. SLS Goes National

On August 21, 2002, seven months after the DM award, *Chitrahaar*⁹, a very popular weekly program of Hindi film songs, was aired on national TV with SLS. The event

⁹ The SLS project subtitled the Wednesday *Chitrahaar* and not the Friday one.

was made more momentous by the launch of SLS around India's Independence Day on August 15, and the fact that *Chitrahaar* was the first and longest running film-song program in the history of Indian television (over 25 years). *Chitrahaar* still enjoyed a viewership of around 150 million, and over time had increasingly concentrated in rural areas where cable was yet to penetrate. Although it was not certain at the time how long SLS would continue on *Chitrahaar*, a benchmarking of literacy skills was required at the beginning of the project to be able to comment on improvements from SLS later. An independent literacy skills survey was initiated by Nielsen's ORG-CSR in early September, 2002, on a sample drawn from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh in the Hindi belt and Gujarat (Nielsen's ORG-CSR, 2003a).

Why did it take seven months from receiving the DM grant to put SLS on national TV? Or nearly six years from when Kothari first began working on SLS? To take the second question first, the answer is simply, ratings and revenue. Most broadcast policy makers' and program producers' instinctive and firm conviction had usually been that SLS would hurt the "R" factor of film-song programs, a genre that had consistently assured good ratings and revenue. Prior to the DM grant, and over the subsequent years, Kothari personally approached the directors of several DDKs in Ahmedabad in Gujarat, Jaipur in Rajasthan, Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, Mumbai in Maharashtra, Trivandrum in Kerala, and Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. None of them wished to experiment with SLS, judging it to be distracting. SLS was lumped with other forms of subtitling such as translation and scrolling subtitling where the user was forced to process audio and subtitles in two different languages, simultaneously, or switch between two different content streams. They could not be convinced that SLS was fundamentally different from other subtitling forms because of the tight synergy it created between audio and subtitles. Furthermore, the strength of belief in 'SLS as distraction' prevented consideration of the video evidence from the villages of Gujarat, documenting the popularity of the concept. Only a fortunate change of guard at DDK Ahmedabad had enabled implementation of SLS on Chitragcet.

Buoyed by the success of *Chitragcet* and armed with evidence of the popularity of SLS, Kothari approached a Deputy Director General (DDG) of Doordarshan in 1999 with a proposal to implement SLS on *Chitrahaar* on national TV. A sample SLS song was discussed but the evidence in support of SLS was glossed over. A few days later, the DDG sent a terse letter summarily rejecting SLS without explanation. Two years later, after the SLS proposal had qualified among 220 finalists for DM, SLS was discussed once again at Doordarshan, this time with another DDG. The proposal was no different from the one rejected earlier – permission to allow SLS on a trial basis on 3-4 episodes of *Chitrahaar* or *Rangoli* programs. The earlier discussion and rejection by another DDG was not mentioned. This proposal went into hibernation.

Following success at the DM in Washington, Kothari contacted the second DDG again, reiterating the proposal to subtitle Doordarshan programs at no cost. At the same time, he approached Doordarshan at the highest level, with the proposal that had qualified for funding at the DM. This time, the IIMA Director and Kothari met the Director General (DG) at Doordarshan, together. They requested, on behalf of the IIMA-Mudra Videotec team, a weekly 30-minute time-slot for a Hindi film song program, in prime time, at commercial rates, to promote national literacy. The DG instantly liked the sample song shown with SLS.

¹⁰ *Chitrahaar* (Wed, 7:30-8:00 pm) and *Rangoli* (Sun, 7:15-8:15 am) were pioneering film-song programs synonymous with the beginning of television in India. At the time of writing, they were produced in-house at DDK, Mumbai but telecast from New Delhi on the national network. Both programs were revenue earners for Doordarshan.

But others from Doordarshan called in during the meeting by the DG, seemed to be actively trying to scuttle the proposal, first on grounds that there were numerous proposals for prime-time slots and this was just another the one. A counter-argument was offered that this was not ‘just another program’ and deserved priority because of its clear objective of literacy that also fit well with the public service goals of Doordarshan.

A DD policy-maker even argued that the proposal was a clever approach (read ‘ploy’) to get a prime-time slot for film-based programming – usually difficult to get – under the guise of literacy. The experience with SLS on Gujarat TV was cited. Finally, DD officials expressed their real fear: if such a program were permitted, it would go into direct competition with Doordarshan’s lucrative *Chitrahaar* and *Rangoli* programs. Given the opening, two options were suggested in an order of preference: a) Doordarshan could share in the profits of the new program or b) Doordarshan could consider allowing subtitling on their own programs, such as *Rangoli* and *Chitrahaar*, at no cost, for the duration of the project. The DG and others at the meeting were informed that the latter proposal was actually a longstanding proposal under consideration by Doordarshan, for which, a decision was yet to be made.

In mid-July 2002, four months after that crucial meeting, six months after the DM grant, and eight months after the hibernating proposal was first discussed, a decision was communicated to DDK Mumbai from Doordarshan Directorate, Delhi to allow the addition of SLS on four episodes of *Rangoli*. The approved DM proposal to create, market, and telecast an own program changed to converting an existing program to subtitling. Assuming that the initial reaction to SLS would be positive and the trial number of episodes could be extended, this was a less risky approach. It was better from the perspective of greater financial flexibility within the available budget and institutionalization of SLS, but with no possibility of financial inflow into the project. Still, if the primary goal of the project was to first test whether SLS actually led to literacy gain, then the revised approach enhanced the SLS team’s ability of stretching the project duration and exposure to subtitling through more programs. An important implication of Doordarshan’s decision was that it effectively replaced Mudra-Videotec as a partner in the SLS project. But the development enhanced, to an important extent, the institutionalization potential of the idea, including the possibility of spreading to different states, languages, and program genres.

With respect to the implementation of SLS on *Rangoli*, Delhi’s decision had to be operationalized at DDK, Mumbai. There was initial resistance among the program producers of both *Rangoli* and *Chitrahaar*, because subtitling implied a readjustment of production scheduling to make two to three days available for subtitling every episode. Although Delhi did mention starting SLS on *Rangoli*, the Director at DDK Mumbai felt more comfortable starting with *Chitrahaar* since it was a shorter program and therefore revenue loss in case of adverse effects could be minimized. Besides, a shorter program duration also meant less time required for subtitling and less adjustment in production re-scheduling. Resistance was whittled away among the program production teams for both the programs after the first episode of *Chitrahaar* with SLS was aired, and overwhelmingly positive e-mails and letters began pouring in from viewers. Through the weekly feedback from *Chitrahaar* viewers, DDK Mumbai was quickly convinced that SLS was indeed popular and preferable to songs without subtitling. *Chitrahaar*’s ratings also went up slightly. Now Kothari had to convince Delhi to extend the trial period of four episodes.

Popularity of SLS: An independent survey

Immediately following the telecast of four SLS episodes, an independent survey was conducted by Nielsen's ORG-CSR (2003b) in the same five states as the baseline, to gauge the popularity of SLS on *Chitrahaar*. *Chitrahaar* viewers were asked if they would like or not like to see SLS on the program and their reasons. A neutral response was also possible. As expected, there was an overwhelming acceptance of SLS: 88.5% either wanted SLS or were neutral to it (Figure 1, **Exhibit 4**). Only 11.5% did not like it, a pattern that was comparable between rural and urban respondents.

The top three reasons for liking SLS were ability to memorize songs (mentioned by 50.9% of respondents who liked SLS), knowing the lyrics (49.4%), and sing along (38.7%). In comparison only 33.7% made a link between SLS and reading/literacy gain. This was a confirmation of earlier findings that SLS was primarily seen as an enhancer of entertainment, and literacy gain was a subconscious outcome. Interestingly, 20.8% of respondents also mentioned that SLS could help those with hearing difficulties.

Like/dislike for SLS was most directly linked to formal education. The lowest approval for SLS (only 56.4%) was among people with no formal education. But even with minimum education, liking for SLS jumped to over 85% and stayed there for higher levels of education as well (Figure 2, **Exhibit 4**). For SLS to be liked, all that was required was some basic knowledge of the alpha-syllables or early functional ability. With a minimum of alpha-syllable knowledge, SLS began to serve an entertainment enhancement function.

At a specially arranged meeting in Delhi, Kothari requested the Director of Research at Nielsen's ORG-CSR to directly share their independent findings on the popularity of SLS with Doordarshan. SLS was not only found to be popular, the average ratings of *Chitrahaar* had also gone up by around 16%. In principle it seemed to Doordarshan that SLS was probably adding value to *Chitrahaar*, and that it could be extended to *Rangoli* under a one year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). That was in September 2002. Yet, it would not be until mid-June 2003 that the MoU could actually be signed between IIMA and Doordarshan.

The coordinator for the SLS project on behalf of Doordarshan held the view that the SLS project needed to give something to Doordarshan for allowing SLS on its programs. The offer of subtitling for a year at no cost to Doordarshan was not enough. The request primarily boiled down to ownership of equipment for subtitling after the MoU period, or no additional program could be given. IIMA was willing to bequeath equipment after one year, provided Doordarshan was willing to commit SLS on two national programs for three years. When negotiations reached a stalemate, Doordarshan's DG had to be approached on several occasions by IIMA's director. Taking a broader perspective than an issue of equipment versus programs, Doordarshan's DG was able to see the twin benefits of SLS: potentially for national literacy; and for program ratings. In his perspective, ownership of equipment for subtitling was a trivial issue. For the SLS team, gaining ownership of equipment symbolized an acknowledgement by Doordarshan that SLS was indeed adding value to their programs, obviating the need for further extensions of generosity. That Doordarshan was doing IIMA a favor by allowing subtitling was a position possibly held individually, but not institutionally. Slowly, the project was being situated, at the higher echelons at least, in a context of cooperation and mutual benefit to both institutions, and more importantly, the nation.

While the core decisions were made at the top, including permission for setting up an IIMA Centre for Same Language Subtitling (C-SLS) on DDK Mumbai premises, the SLS team still had to work out the details of the MoU with officials lower down. Possibly due to the unpleasantness caused by the question of ownership of equipment, minor issues such as electricity and then rent cropped up in due course, causing unexpected delays leading up to the signing of the MoU. Several letters and faxes to Doordarshan's DG were necessary to eventually arrive at an MoU, nine months after it was first mooted, based on a broadly agreed upon approach.

A beneficial delay

The nine months that it took to hammer out a final MoU, which was essentially not very different from the first draft proposed, ended up contributing positively to the project. SLS continued informally on the weekly *Chitrahaar*, completing one year in mid-August, 2003. Then under the MoU, Doordarshan accepted the proposal of subtitling on Rangoli for one year and *Chitrahaar* for an additional year. The commitment under DM to mount 30 minutes of weekly SLS on national TV for one year was met even before the MoU went into effect. An additional year with 90 weekly minutes of SLS was negotiated. In Gujarat, DDK Ahmedabad restarted SLS on *Chitrageet* from May 2003, bringing the total subtitling output at C-SLS to two hours of weekly programming. Previously, professional subtitling used to cost the project \$400 per 30 minutes of song programming. With the establishment of C-SLS at DDK Mumbai, it was cut by half.

With one program having been on national TV for one year, the fundamental question for the SLS project was, of course, did it contribute to measurable literacy skill improvement?

Did SLS contribute to reading skill improvement on national TV and program ratings?

After one year of *Chitrahaar*'s presence on national TV, the SLS team could say confidently that, Yes, SLS did impact literacy skills and program ratings positively. For the first time, a reputed agency, Nielsen's ORG-CSR, was involved in independently assessing the impact of SLS. An in-depth benchmark survey of reading/writing skills was conducted in September 2002 with a sample of over 13,000 individuals from the same five states as reported earlier. In September 2003, a year after the baseline, the exact same battery of tests was re-administered to the entire sample to determine if literacy skill improvement did occur among regular viewers of *Chitrahaar* as compared to those who tended not to watch the program¹¹.

Nielsen's ORG-CSR found that those exposed to SLS regularly on *Chitrahaar*/national TV, demonstrated 2.8 times more improvement than those who did not watch the program (see Figure 3, **Exhibit 4**). Those with medium exposure improved twice as much. The pattern of improvement by exposure was similar for in-school and out-of-school people (Figure 4, **Exhibit 4**). Interestingly, out-of-school people with high exposure to SLS improved more than in-school children with no exposure to SLS¹².

¹¹ These data sets are available for independent verification and analysis.

¹² The wealth of data from the ORG-CSR study remains to be analyzed. The preliminary analysis of group differences was statistically significant.

Program ratings responded well to SLS, improving by 16.3% on *Chitrahaar* (Figure 5, **Exhibit 4**). The success of SLS on *Chitrahaar* prompted Doordarshan to also permit SLS on *Rangoli*, another national program of Hindi film songs, starting in August 2003. On *Rangoli* too, the ratings responded similarly, going up by 17%. SLS was also implemented in Chitrageet (Maharashtra) and was soon to start on a Telugu film song program in Andhra Pradesh.

The Costs of SLS

SLS contributed to the reinforcement of literacy skills in a phase the NLM called Post-Literacy (PL) previously, and subsequently called Continuing Education (CE). PL programs were known to have routinely budgeted around \$3 per person per year. The total cost of getting a 30-minute program of film songs subtitled professionally, at TV broadcast quality, was around \$400 per episode in India. Since subtitling was more or less a fixed cost, irrespective of program or language, a cost-benefit look at SLS depended on the reach of the subtitled program among early and non-literate viewers. For example, the annual cost of adding SLS to *Chitrahaar*, a weekly 30-minute program of Hindi film songs, was \$20,800. *Chitrahaar*, being a program that was primarily popular in rural areas, it had an estimated viewership of 150 million. With it, reading practice was possible for 64.5 million early literates and motivation and print exposure to an additional 51 million non-literates, at an annual per person cost of \$0.00018! In other words, the cost of a cappuccino (\$2) could potentially provide reading practice, print exposure, and motivation for literacy to 11,111 early or non-literate people in India, for one full year. As compared to traditional PL programs in the past, SLS could be thought of as:

- 1) being 16,666 times cheaper
- 2) having a reach at least eight times greater (at >40%) than the maximum PL coverage of 5% early literates in any given state (Kothari *et al.*, 2002)

While PL and CE programs struggled to exact even short-term participation of early literates, SLS guaranteed lifelong, automatic reading in a home environment, due to the time-honored and ubiquitous passion for film songs. At 1,000 films produced per year in 20 languages, the Indian film industry, popularly referred to as Bollywood, far surpassed Hollywood's output. With an average of at least five songs per film, SLS could draw upon an additional 5,000 film songs annually. As if this bottomless song well was not enough, folk, devotional, and other popular song genres made an inexhaustible resource for the SLS team to tap. The point was not to replace PL and/or CE programs with SLS, because the latter was thousands of times cheaper. Instead, it was argued that even if a miniscule fraction of resources for traditional programs were to be allocated for SLS, it could effectively multiply the positive outcomes of all ongoing educational activities.

Challenges and Related Questions

Despite the success of SLS, the idea had not yet found support among education policy-makers in India. After a long process of persuasion, trial, and demonstrations, SLS had found some acceptance in Doordarshan, at least as an idea that contributed to ratings. Improved ratings obviously translated into more revenue. But the state broadcaster was not easily persuaded to divert SLS's monetary contribution to paying for subtitling costs. DM funding, originally given for one program for one year, was stretched to two national

programs for two years, and two state programs for one year. By June 2004, the last of the DM funding would be exhausted, the MoU with Doordarshan, officially over.

Same Language Subtitling was now proven, ready. It cost close to nothing. It made hundreds of millions of people enjoy reading, subconsciously. Some of the questions confronting Kothari and his team were:

- 1) How could SLS become financially sustainable? The cost of SLS being so low, how could that be a barrier to acceptance?
- 2) How could the SLS idea become an industry standard? Was that desirable?
- 3) For which languages and states in India was SLS relevant? Strategically, how should one plan for the spread of SLS to different states and languages, if it was a good idea?
- 4) What was the international relevance of SLS? How could SLS spread to other countries?
- 5) Were there other media that could take advantage of the SLS technique? How?
- 6) Which national and international institutions should take SLS forward?
- 7) SLS had required a dogged pursuit, mostly in the face of bureaucratic opposition. How could one change policy-making to not be a barrier but an active agent in encouraging innovation?
- 8) Strategically, what did the project do right to bring SLS so far? What could have been done better?
- 9) Research had been a constant thread through the SLS effort, yet policy-makers never really considered it in their decision-making. So was so much research necessary? If research did not move policy-makers much, what did?

References

- Athreya, Venkatesh B. and Sheela Rani Chunkath, 1996. *Literacy and Empowerment*, Sage Publications: New Delhi.
- Kothari, Brij, 2003. "Literacy in India: A Tide of Rising Rates but Low Levels." In *Reading Beyond the Alphabet: Innovations in Lifelong Literacy*, Kothari, Brij, P.G. Vijaya Sherry Chand and Michael Norton (editors), Sage Publications: New Delhi.
- Kothari, Brij 1998. "Film Songs as Continuing Education: Same Language Subtitling for Literacy". *Economic and Political Weekly*, 33(39):2507-2510 (Sept. 26, 98).
- Kothari, Brij and Ashok Joshi 2002. "Benchmarking Early Literacy Skills: Developing a Tool". *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(34): 3497-3499 (Aug. 24-30, 02).
- Kothari, Brij, Avinash Pandey, and Amita Chudgar (forthcoming, 2004). "Reading Out of the Idiot Box: Same Language Subtitling on Television in India". *Information Technologies and International Development*.
- Kothari, Brij with Avinash Pandey, Nirali Joshi, and Ashok Joshi (2003). "Your Songs, Our Lyrics: Same Language Subtitling of Folk Songs". Unpublished Manuscript.
- Kothari, Brij, Joe Takeda, Ashok Joshi, and Avinash Pandey (2002). "Same Language Subtitling: A Butterfly for Literacy?" *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 21(1): 55-66.

National Literacy Mission (NLM). (2000). *Literacy rates: An analysis based on NSSO survey 1998*. New Delhi: Directorate of Adult Education.

Nielsen's ORG-CSR (2003a). "Impact of Same Language Subtitling on Literacy: A Baseline Survey". Unpublished Report.

Nielsen's ORG-CSR (2003b). "Assessment of Popularity of Same Language Subtitling in *Chitrahaar*". Unpublished Report.

PROBE, 1999. *Public Report on Basic Education in India*, Oxford University Press: Delhi. □

Exhibit 1

BOLLYWOOD, TELEVISION AND SAME LANGUAGE SUBTITLING (SLS):
A PANACEA OR SUGAR PILL FOR INDIA'S MASSIVE LITERACY CHALLENGE?

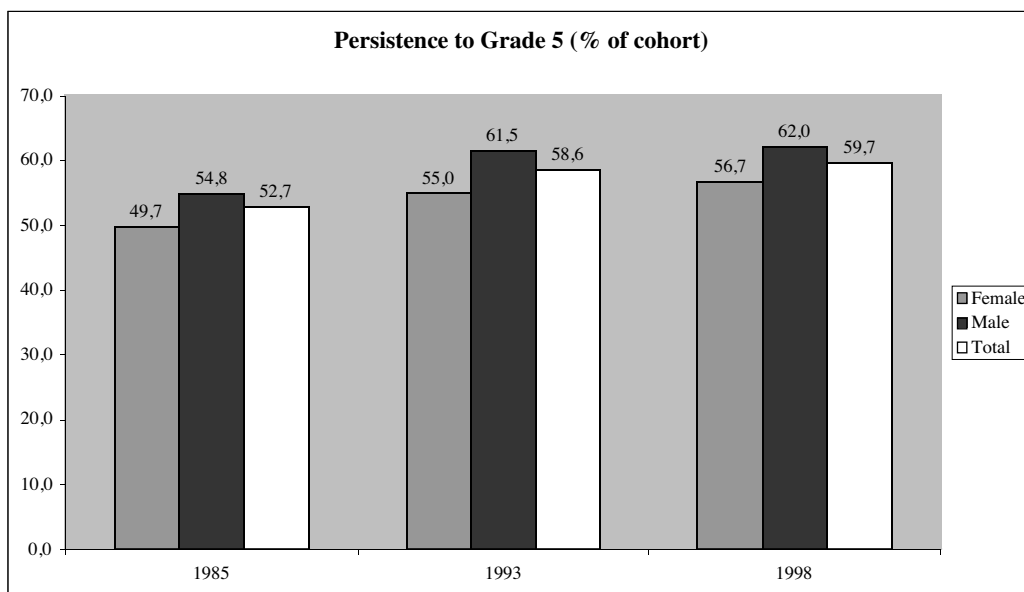
Literacy in India, a Growing Bubble

Table 1: Decadal literacy growth in India (7+ age group)

Year	Literacy (Percentage)	Decadal Growth	Non-literates (millions)
1951	18.3	--	--
1961	28.3	10.0	249.40
1971	34.4	6.1	283.03
1981	43.5	9.1	305.31
1991	52.5	8.7	328.88
2001	65.4	12.9	296.20

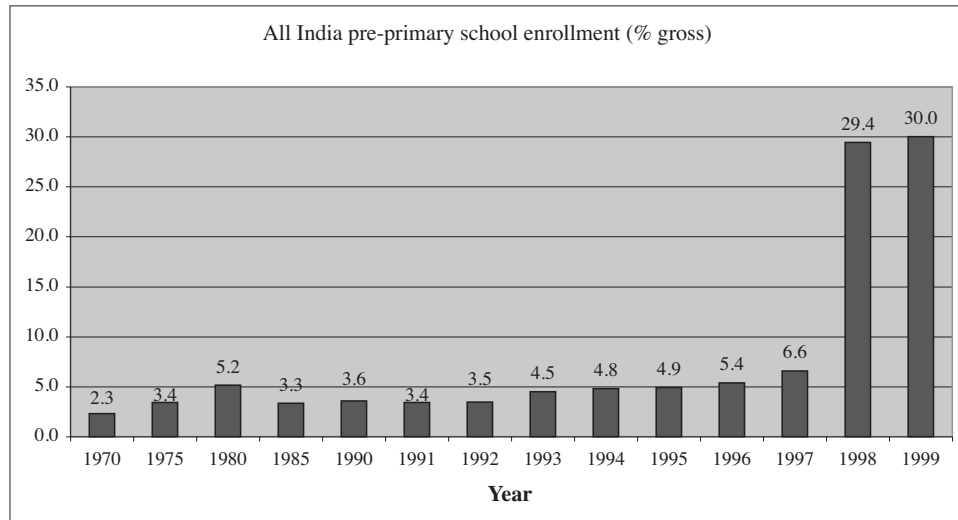
Source: NLM (2000) and 2001 Census.

Figure 1. Persistence to Grade 5 (All India)



Source: World Development Indicators.

Exhibit 1 (continued)

Figure 2. Pre-primary education in India

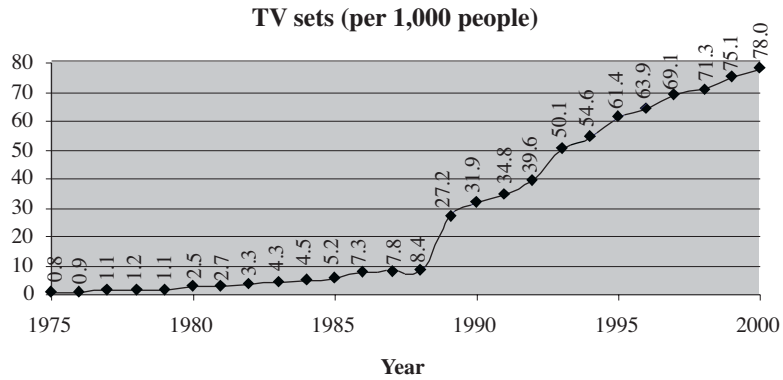
Source: World Development Indicators.

Exhibit 2

BOLLYWOOD, TELEVISION AND SAME LANGUAGE SUBTITLING (SLS):
A PANACEA OR SUGAR PILL FOR INDIA'S MASSIVE LITERACY CHALLENGE?

Literacy and Television Penetration in India

Figure 1. Growth of television in India



Source: World Development Indicators.

Figure 2. Literacy levels of TV viewers in 8 Gujarat villages

Gujarat villages: Literacy levels of TV viewers

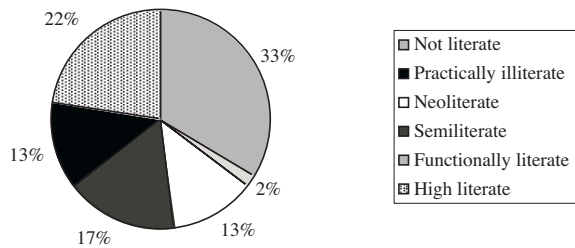


Figure 3. Literacy levels of TV viewers in five-state study

Educational levels of TV viewers

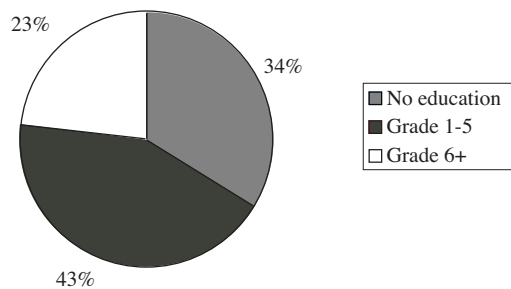


Exhibit 3

BOLLYWOOD, TELEVISION AND SAME LANGUAGE SUBTITLING (SLS):
A PANACEA OR SUGAR PILL FOR INDIA'S MASSIVE LITERACY CHALLENGE?

Same Language Subtitling: Experiences and Experiments

Table 1. Postcard comments received by *Chitrageet* program with SLS

Comments	Count	Responses (%)	Respondents (%)
<i>Direct comment on subtitling</i>			
We liked the subtitles	701	16.9	34.0
Did not like the subtitles	3	0.0	0.1
<i>Indirect comments on subtitling's contribution to learning</i>			
Good for literacy or literacy campaign	139	3.3	6.7
Improves reading ability	131	3.2	6.4
Good for early literates and adults	93	2.3	4.5
Would like efforts to continue	72	1.7	3.5
Good for school-going children	67	1.6	3.3
It is an innovative idea/experiment	61	1.5	3.0
Improves writing ability	52	1.3	2.5
Improves pronunciation	20	0.5	1.0
Request for lyrics			
Would like <i>Chitrageet Na Bol</i> (lyrics)	1,434	34.6	69.6
No comment, only address given for getting lyrics	106	2.6	5.1
Other social benefits			
Good for hard of hearing and deaf	7	0.1	0.3
<i>General comments</i>			
We see and like <i>Chitrageet</i>	1,115	26.9	54.1
Request for showing new songs	149	3.5	7.2
Total responses	4,148	100.0	201.3
n = 2,060 postcards			

Table 2. Reasons for liking SLS on *Chitrageet*

	Responses
Helps to improve reading and writing	91 (17.8%)
Has made it easier to become literate	57 (11.1%)
To learn lyrics of songs	45 (8.8%)
Can catch words that were difficult to hear clearly earlier	36 (7.0%)
Semi-literate and non-literate can learn to read	34 (6.6%)
Improves literacy	34 (6.6%)
Greater enjoyment with songs	32 (6.3%)
Can use to teach non-literates	19 (3.7%)
Improves pronunciation	9 (1.8%)
Useful for the deaf	4 (0.8%)
No comment	127 (24.8%)

Exhibit 3 (continued)

Box 1. Viewer comments following the use of SLS in Chitrageet (Gujarati film song program)

Boy from Kheda district: “Everyone at home loves to read and listen to songs, especially my mother. My brother has learnt to read from Chitrageet. Because he is now able to read the words, understand the meaning, he is able to learn new words.”

Kanabhai Adedra from Porbandar: “We not only enjoy watching *Chitrageet* but also enjoy reading it. We also like this “scheme” of sending the lyrics. Many women in our village are illiterate and we are training them to read and write. These women really like Bhajans and Garbas.”

Anonymous letter: “Many want to participate in Gujarati music but don't have a collection of songs. These people can now copy the songs, practice them and prepare for music competitions.”

Literacy volunteer: “I, Keshava, village Vadod, district Surendranagar, taluka Vadhvan am working to impart literacy to 10-12 illiterate people. I have found your program to be extremely useful.”

Ritesh Bhabala from Rajkot: “I am a Class X student. My sister was illiterate but gradually she has learned to identify words. I am confident that with your Chitrageet and my efforts, I will be able to teach her to read and write.”

Nitaben Mehta from Sabarkantha: “I don't know about others but my two children, one of whom is in KG and the other in Class II, identify the letters from the strip you release with Chitrageet on TV.”

Mayurkumar Samrath from Junagadh: “Our son Keval and daughter Chandni and the children from the neighborhood have developed a habit of watching the program and reading. The program was a blessing, especially during the vacations.”

Rajkot's Principal at the Sanskar Vidyalaya, H.N. Makwana: “Many children are singing these songs in the school after seeing them on TV. I believe that it will be good for their overall development if the children are made to write and sing some selected songs from these in class.”

Exhibit 3 (continued)

Table 3. Reasons for liking SLS on GTBA

Reason	Responses	
<i>Enhancement of entertainment</i>		
We can write the folk songs and <i>bhajans</i>	458	20.6%
We can read what we hear; can sing along; can memorize songs better	428	19.3%
We can understand the folk songs and <i>bhajans</i> better	373	16.8%
<i>Sub-total (entertainment)</i>	1,259	56.7%
<i>Educational contribution</i>		
Contributes to the literacy drive; less educated, early literates, and children learn and try to read; good for the education of the new generation	450	20.3%
Language, writing, and spelling improves; pronunciation improves	131	5.9%
The meaning of folk songs and <i>bhajans</i> becomes clearer	61	2.7%
<i>Sub-total (education)</i>	642	28.9%
<i>Synergy with competition</i>		
We can get the answers to the questions from the subtitles	185	8.3%
<i>Aids 'hearing'</i>		
Helps the hearing disadvantaged to follow better	112	5.0%
<i>Redresses technical difficulties</i>		
Subtitles help when there is a problem with the TV set or reception	21	0.9%
Total (responses from n = 1,765 families)	2,219	100.0%

Exhibit 4

BOLLYWOOD, TELEVISION AND SAME LANGUAGE SUBTITLING (SLS):
A PANACEA OR SUGAR PILL FOR INDIA'S MASSIVE LITERACY CHALLENGE?

Same Language Subtitling on National TV: An Independent Assessment of Impact

Figure 1. Like or dislike for SLS on *Chitrahaar*

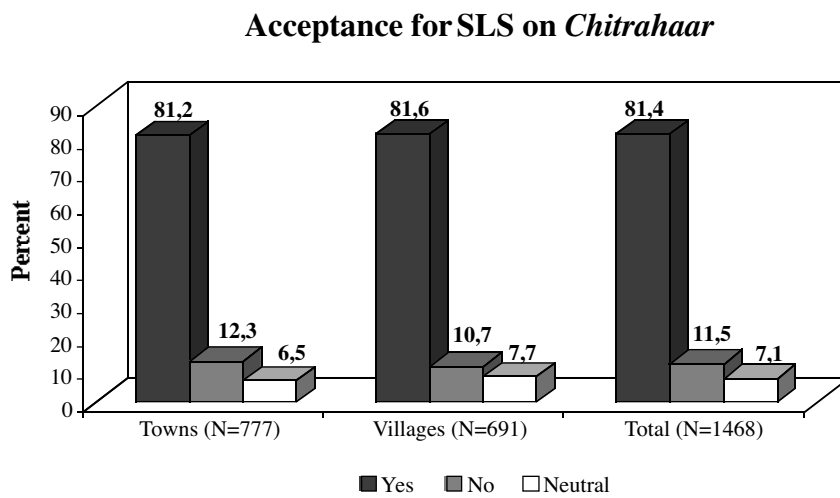


Figure 2. Liking for SLS on *Chitrahaar* by formal education

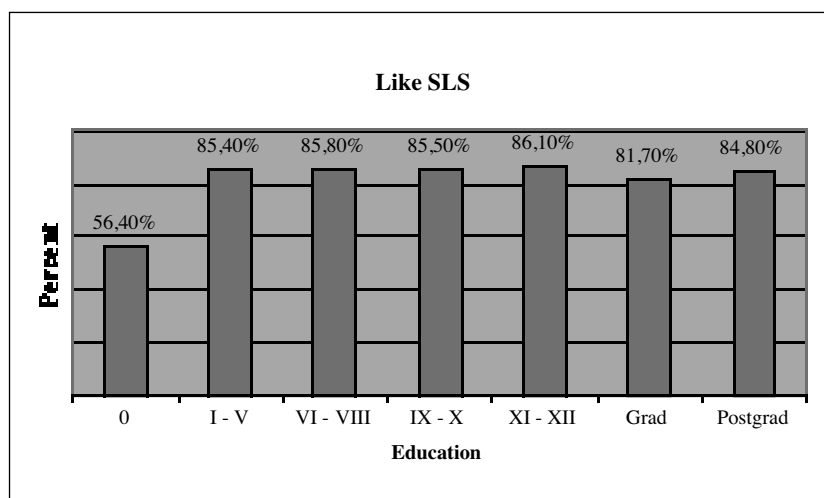
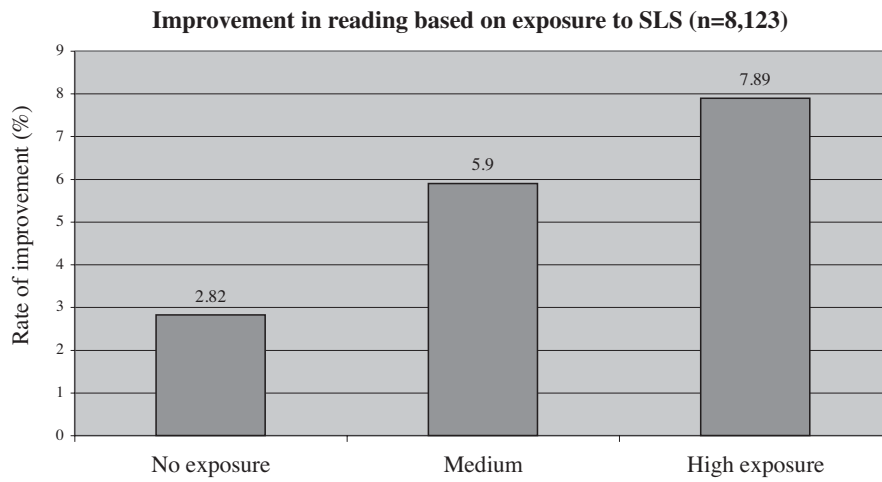


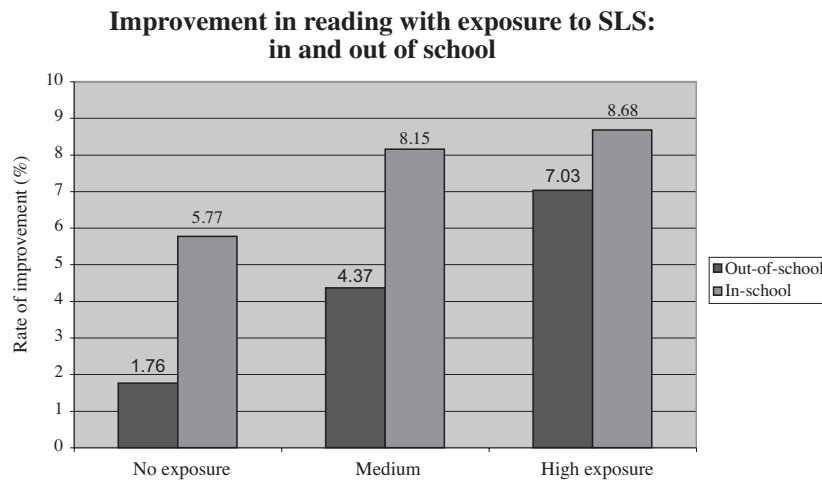
Exhibit 4 (continued)

Figure 3. Improvement from exposure to SLS



AC Nielsen (ORG-CSR): Independent study after 1 year of SLS on national TV

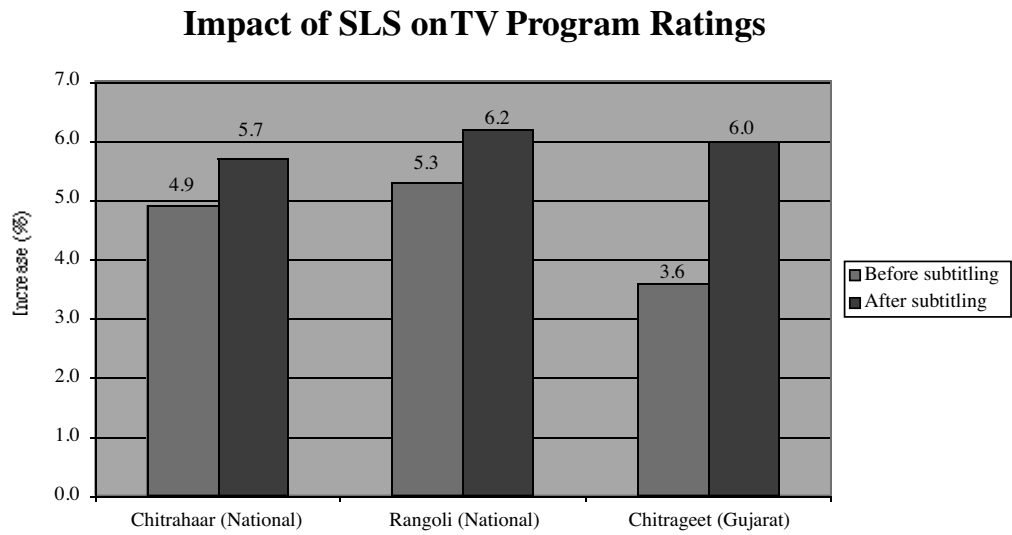
Figure 4. Improvement from exposure to SLS, In/Out of school



AC Nielsen (ORG-CSR): Independent study after 1 year of SLS on national TV

Exhibit 4 (continued)

Figure 5. Impact of SLS on program ratings



Average of 12 episodes, before and after SLS, based on TAM ratings

Exhibit 5

BOLLYWOOD, TELEVISION AND SAME LANGUAGE SUBTITLING (SLS):
A PANACEA OR SUGAR PILL FOR INDIA'S MASSIVE LITERACY CHALLENGE?

Acronyms Used

C-SLS	Centre for Same Language Subtitling
CE	Continuing Education
CG	Control Group
C&S	Cable and Satellite
DDG	Deputy Director General (at Doordarshan)
DDK	Doordarshan Kendra
DG	Director General (at Doordarshan)
DM	Development Marketplace
GTBA	<i>Geet Tamara Bol Amara</i> (Your Songs, Our Lyrics)
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IC-SLS	International Center for Same Language Subtitling
IIMA	Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India
NLM	National Literacy Mission
NRS	National Readership Survey
ORG-CSR	ORG-Center for Social Research (AC Nielsen's)
PL	Post Literacy
PROBE	Public Report on Basic Education
SG	Subtitle Group
SLS	Same Language Subtitling
TLC	Total Literacy Campaign
WSG	Without Subtitle Group