

UNIT 7 LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

Course contents and audio-visual aids help the teachers to transact the language curriculum. However, effective transaction of language curriculum calls for organisation of learning experiences around lifelike situations and activities. These situations and activities should be such that they provide opportunity for the functional use of language skills and abilities demanded in real life-situations. The field of co-curricular activities is one such area that is well suited for this purpose. These activities create interest and give learners an opportunity to use the learned knowledge and skills (in language) in situations that they may encounter in real life. Children are best motivated for language learning when they can realise the practical uses of a particular skill. When learners feel that the skills and abilities (being taught) really help them in communicating properly in real life situations, they become motivated. It may be noted that children, particularly at the primary stage, themselves show tremendous interest in communicating and expressing their ideas and feelings. Hence, more emphasis should be given to learners' participation in the practical use of language skills rather than upon their formal training.

The ability to communicate and express one's thoughts and feelings to others in an effective manner is a necessary condition of successful participation in social life. It has been observed that children feel shy and hesitate to communicate and express themselves freely in formal class-room situation. But in the informal atmosphere created through co-curricular activities they get opportunities for practice in the art of social expressions and thus develop their ability to communicate without feeling shy. As teachers, we should try to plan and organise co-curricular activities in such a way that learners get ample opportunities to develop the ability to communicate freely. This unit provides a direction in this regard.

7.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- identify the relevance of co-curricular activities;
- discuss the importance of co-curricular activities in developing language skills;
- list the major co-curricular activities; and
- organise suitable co-curricular activities for developing learners' language skills.

7.3 CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: ITS RELEVANCE

Present educational theory fully recognises that education is, above all, a process of social adjustment. With this recognition, it has evolved a new respect for the social nature of the child, his spontaneous social inclination and interests. It is upon the school more than upon any other agency. The school, therefore, should provide programmes that contribute meaningfully in this direction. To quote the Secondary Education Commission:

"We do not visualise the school as merely a place of formal learning whose main concern is to communicate a certain prescribed quantum of knowledge but rather as a living and organic community which is primarily interested in training its pupils in what we called 'gracious art of living' ... The art of living is much more comprehensive concept than the acquisition of knowledge, however intelligently planned. It includes training in the habit and graces of social life and capacity for cooperative group work. This can only be cultivated in the context of social life. We would like to see these schools, humming with activities in which each student would be able to discover himself... to develop his individual talents and capabilities and self-confidence and on the other hand himself to being made the leader in cooperative work."* The Commission rightly felt that co-curricular activities would go a long way to achieve these objectives and, therefore, it suggested that co-curricular activities must find a recognised place in every school.

Coming specifically to the relevance of co-curricular activities in developing language skills, we have already pointed out that co-curricular activities provide various situations that can be effectively used to develop language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this context we should not lose sight of the fact that the skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing are interlinked and interdependent. As a matter of fact one co-curricular activity should be used to develop more than one skill. For example, recitation and story telling can be utilized both for the development of the listening and speaking skills. Similarly, through a picture composition activity, you can help the learner to develop not only the skills of speaking and writing but also the skills of listening and reading. Keeping this in mind, we have not classified the suggested activities for each language skill separately. Rather in discussing them, we have suggested that how they can be used for the development of one skill or the other.

Check Your Progress

Note: Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. Put a tick mark (✓) against the correct statements.
 - a) Co-curricular activities develop learners' language skills. ()
 - b) Co-curricular activities should be associated with learners' life related situations. ()

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|---|-----|
| c) Co-curricular activities do not provide opportunity for the functional use of language skills and abilities. | () |
| d) Learners became motivated when they get opportunity to express or communicate their ideas. | () |
| e) Co-curricular activities are designed for formal situations. | () |

7.4 MAJOR CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

There are various types of co-curricular activities meant for developing learners language skills. Some of the major co-curricular activities have been listed below:

- i) Recitation (of Rhymes, Action Songs and Poems)
- ii) Conversation (on familiar and un-familiar topics)
- iii) Story Telling
- iv) Dialogue
- v) Picture Composition
- vi) Word Building
- vii) Description (of known objects, places, events)
- viii) Declamation & Debates
- ix) Acting Out
- x) Kavi Darbar
- xi) Children's Assembly.

The above list, however, is not exhaustive. You can use some other activities which in your experience you found useful.

In the following pages we have tried to explain how each of the above mentioned activities can be planned and conducted.

7.4.1 Recitation (Rhymes, Action Songs and Poems)

Recitation of rhymes, action songs, poems etc. can make a significant contribution to the development of skills of listening and speaking (particularly at early primary stage).

The significance of this activity is that learners can easily store rhymes or action songs in their memory. Young learners do not need any extra effort to memorize poems etc., rather they enjoy learning them. Just by listening and reciting the poems several times, they become part of the learners' permanent collection. In the later primary stage for participating in such activities, learners will need to collect the recitation material from books and magazines. Thus, they will be getting the opportunity to develop the skill of reading also. For the early stages (i.e. classes I-III) you may collect some rhymes, action songs and poems suitable for these classes.

Activity 1

Write the poem "Twinkle Twinkle little star" on the black board and practice action demonstrating the Rhymes along with children in the classroom.

This activity can be organised as a group activity as well as on individual basis. Group activities help learners develop healthy competition among themselves. The class

may be divided into two or more groups. The groups should be so formed that they are nearly and possibly equal from the point of view of knowledge and abilities. Then the class should be seated in such a way that the members of each group sit together.

Let us take it that this activity is being taken with the children of classes I & II. For this purpose you may select suitable poem for this age group. The class is divided into the two groups - A and B. You should recite the whole poem with proper rhythm, modulation and pauses. Suppose the poem consists of 10-12 lines. After reciting the whole poem once, you may now recite one or two lines of the poem and ask the learners to recite those lines along with you. Later on, you may take up four more lines of the poem for recitation. Allow your learners to recite these lines along with you. When the whole poem has been recited in this way, you ask each group to recite the poem independently. First of all a pupil from group A will recite the first line of the poem. If s/he recite correctly, then the next line is taken up by a pupil from group B and so on, until the whole poem has been recited. If a learner makes mistake or fails to recite the whole line, the one in the opposite group, whose turn comes next, gets the chance. If s/he succeeds in doing this, his/her group gets a point. If s/he cannot, the other group gets the chance. That group in which the pupils recite correctly gets a point. Pupils who have failed to recite the line correctly are required to repeat the same after it has been corrected. The points can be recorded on the chalk-board and can be totalled up at the end of the recitation.

After the whole poem has been correctly recited, you may ask questions to test the understanding of the poem's subject matter. The procedure for it could be the same as for recitation. Now members of group A and B will be asked questions on the poem instead of being asked to recite the lines of the poem.

For classes IV and V, this activity can be taken up in the following manner —

- The class with your assistance or independently select five or six poems for the recitation competition.
- A sub-group of three or four pupils is formed from a group and each group is given one of the selected poems to memorise. Each of the subgroups will have different poems.
- Next day, the recitation competition is held when the pupils from each sub-group recite their poem.
- The pupil's performance is judged on the basis of the recitation of the poem with proper rhythm, modulation and expression and they are ranked accordingly.
- The group scoring higher marks on the basis of the performance of its subgroups, is declared the winner.

For testing the understanding of the content of the poem, group A in the class may be asked to put question to group B, who in turn is expected to answer those questions. This process can be reversed. Now group B takes another selected poem and asks questions to group A. Again the group scoring more marks is declared the winner.

You can also use this type of competition for word building, declamation, narration and debate etc.

All such activities will contribute towards the development of the skills of listening and speaking in an interesting and pleasant way.

7.4.2 Conversation (Familiar Topics)

Topics such as functions at home, events to school, happenings in the neighbourhood, celebration of National Days, fairs, festivals, picnic, education excursions, jourmies by bus, field trips, jourmies by train, description of natural scenes etc. can be taken up for conducting the activity of conversation. This can be organised either on individual basis or on group basis.



Fig. 7.1: Scene of a picnic

7.4.3 Story Telling

We all know that children are very fond of stories. They like listening to them, as well as making up and telling them. You can conduct a story-making activity with classes I-III in the following manner.

Divide the class into groups of five or six children per group. The groups may then be asked to go out and collect objects like stones, pebbles, leaves, broken pieces of wood, twigs and branches etc. After collection they are asked to sit groupwise at some place in the school and talk among themselves about the shape, colour, size etc. of the objects they have collected.

After about fifteen minutes the groups are asked to come back to the classroom. Each group is now required to develop a story about the things they have collected.

This activity may appear to be difficult for the learners. But our objective is not to expect a story which fulfils any literary requirements. Our aim is just to allow the children to imagine freely.



Fig. 7.2: A saint deeply engaged in the prayer in a forest

With classes IV-V, this activity may be conducted somewhat differently. The students are asked to tell a story. The story is to be built up by each member by adding a sentence or sentences in turn. You may start this with a sentence such as "Once upon a time there lived a saint in a forest".

During this process some pupils might make up funny sentences. You should take care to curb such tendencies, without curbing the enthusiasm of the children. You should also keep a watch on incorrect language and correct such errors as the story proceeds.

7.4.4 Dialogue

You can select or write a few interesting dialogues and ask your learners to read them with proper modulation and action. In this way you can help your learners to develop the ability to interact with various individuals they may meet, be it in the market, on the road or inside their home. Thus, they will get opportunity for practicing the art of social expression.

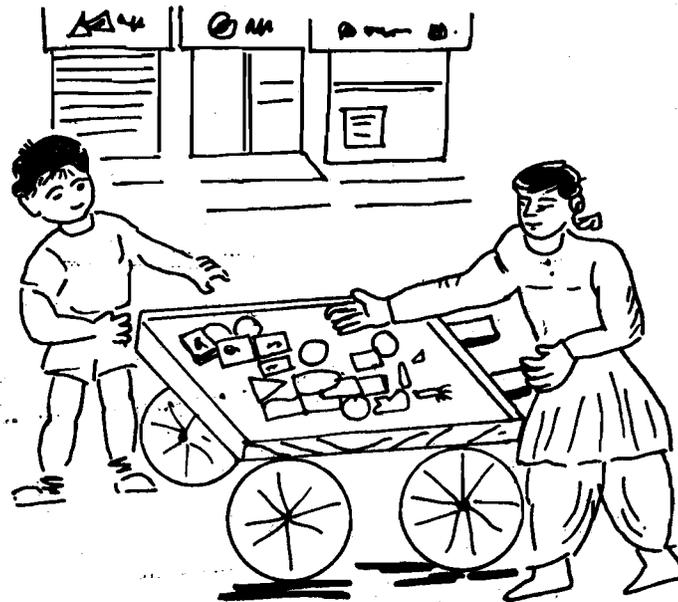


Fig. 7.3: A boy talking to a vender in a market

7.4.5 Picture Composition

Young learners like pictures which are large and colourful with plenty of details and actions. Such pictures are appealing to the children and give scope to their imagination. Children like pictures, illustrating a story that they know or stories that they can make up for themselves. Pictures which suggest stories are of great help in developing their imagination and can be used to help learners in language learning. These picture stories can be used both for oral and written composition.

For oral composition through pictures the class may be divided into four or five groups. You may give a picture to each of the group and ask them to examine it carefully. Before you give the picture to the learners, you should study the picture and prepare four to five questions thereon for each of the groups.

Then give each group some time, say five minutes, to observe the picture carefully and discuss it among its members. Now ask the learners one by one the question that you have prepared earlier.

After carrying out this activity for some time, you could take it up in a different way. Now one picture is given to two groups. One group may ask questions and the other answers those questions and vice-versa.

The same activity can be extended for written composition. In classes I-II you can write the answers given by children on the black-board and ask the children to copy them.

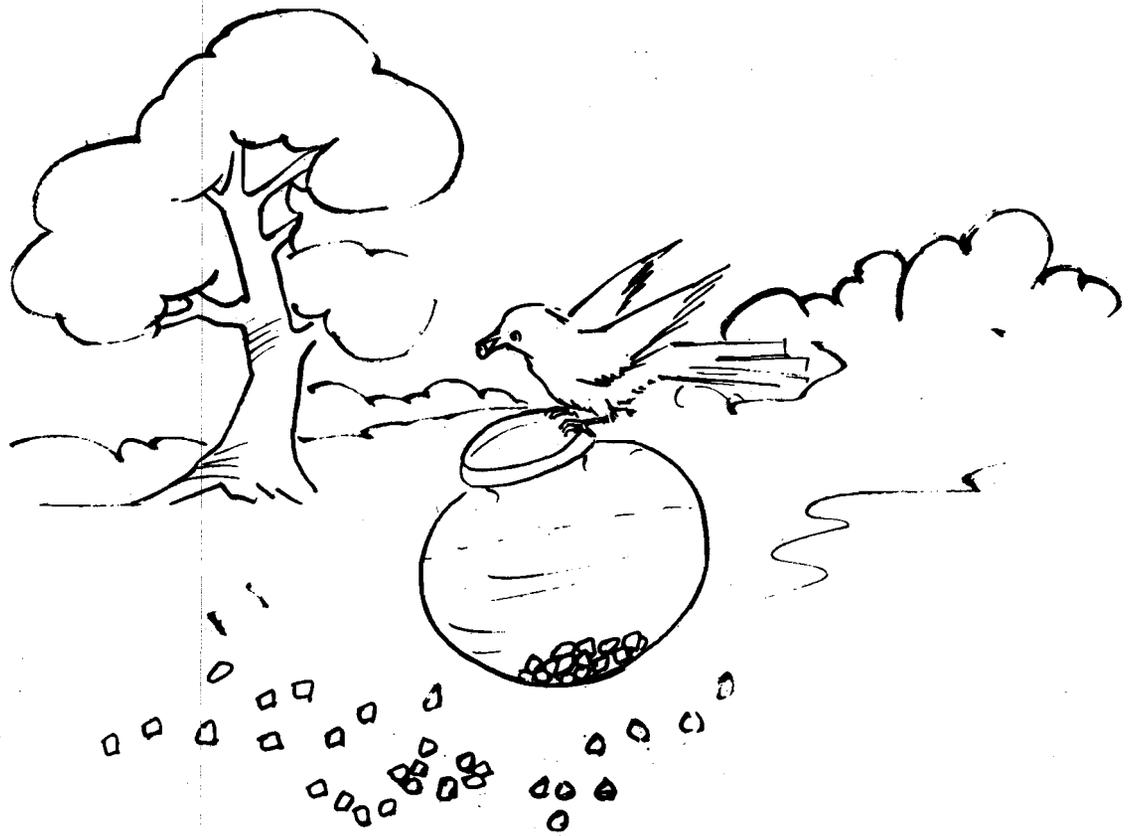


Fig. 7.4: Composition

In classes III- V the learners themselves write the answers given by them and, thus, develop a composition based on a particular picture.

7.4.6 Word Building

There are a number of word building activities which can be conducted at all levels in the primary stage.

One such type of activity which can be successfully carried out at the early primary stage is as follows:

Make the children sit in a circle. Ask a child to say any word, for example 'cat'. Then the child sitting next to him say a word which rhymes with 'cat', e.g. 'rat' or 'bat' and so on. If a particular child fails to form a rhyming word, the child next to him should be asked. Initially the children may use words without forming any sense, but gradually they should be encouraged to use words which are meaningful. At the later primary stage such words like 'fine', 'line', 'wine', 'align', etc. can be taken up.

Later on, the children may be given just one letter and they be asked to name the objects that start with that letter, for example, with P they can make words like pen, pencil, paper, etc.

The game of Antakshari (forming a new word with the last letter of the word spoken earlier) can also be useful in this regard. One child starts the game by saying a word, for example 'hat'. The child sitting next to him has to make a word with 't' the last letter of the word 'hat'. He says 'toy'. Now the next child makes a word with 'y' (the last letter in the word 'toy') and the next one says 'yellow'. The game thus goes on.

Next, you may form two teams. One team can think of a word and indicate its beginning and end (sounds, only). The other team can ask for clues and guess the word. If they guess it correctly, they get a point and then it is now their turn to select the word.

Another word building game can be carried out by forming pairs of children. One child writes or speaks a letter and the other one forms a word with that letter. This can go on till they write ten meaningful words.

Another interesting activity can be conducted in the following manner. Form groups of five children per group and let each group choose its leader. Now ask the leader to write down any word on a paper. The leader, after writing the word, passes on the paper to the next child in his/her own group. S/he adds another word to the word already written. The word should be such that it contributes meaningfully to the development of a sentence. This activity can be conducted with the upper primary stage.

In this way you can think of other interesting activities to build up the vocabulary of your learner.

7.4.7 Description of Known (Objects, Places and Events)

For conducting an activity on description of known objects you may ask the learners to name the objects that are familiar to them. You should write all the names on the blackboard and can easily refer when necessary. Now divide the class into two groups. A learner from one group ask the other group for the objects. While asking for the object, the learner describes its shape, colour, size, etc. but does not tell its name. One learner from the second group goes to the blackboard and points out to the word naming the object. All the learners now copy that word in their exercise books. The activity is, thus, continued till you come to the last word written on the development of all the language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

7.4.8 Declamation and Debates

Declamation is basically an activity, which provides practice in speech or recitation. But preparing a piece for declamation gives learners the opportunity for reading and writing also and its presentation before an audience leads to the development of speaking skills. Choose easy and familiar topics for declamation and ask the pupils to speak on them for one minute. This activity can be taken up for individuals and also for groups.

Debates can be conducted in classes IV & V on simple topics such as utility of home work, need of school uniform, or is watching television useful, etc.

It cannot, however, be denied that with these classes debates actually turn into set speeches. But even so, they provide children with opportunities to face the audience to get rid of stagefright. They also permit them to react to a particular topic and to learn the ways to counter the opponents, arguments. Apart from these advantages, declamations and debates train the students also in the formalities and etiquette that are to be observed on formal occasions.

7.4.9 Acting Out

Children by nature are very fond of acting. This activity can be taken up under different forms-mimicry, mono-acting, acting plays, etc.

i) Mimicry and Mono-acting

Children in classes I & II may be asked to mimic the sounds produced by some animals, birds, bus, train, etc. This can be conducted on the 'guess what' method. In mono-acting, some children perform actions like writing in a notebook, washing clothes, bringing water from the well, collecting flowers etc. Other students are asked to name the action.

ii) Acting a Play

This activity can be more suitable for the children of classes III-V. Divide these children into two groups. Each group should put up a play under your guidance. Make sure that each child has a role to play.

Before this activity is performed, you should provide the children enough rehearsal. This will make them feel confident. You can use such dramatic activity to great advantage in developing the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

