

Block

1**PUPIL AND TEACHER**

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Entering a school is a turning-point in the life of a child. And it is our duty as teachers to make this a pleasant and meaningful experience for her. The aim of this course is just this – that the child is met with a gentle, affectionate and understanding environment, so she can grow up to be a happy individual with a motivation and curiosity to learn. This is not to say that no learning happened at home – lots did! – but it was unstructured and spontaneous.

In **Block 1: Pupil and Teacher** we make you aware of the prevailing theories on early and emergent literacy. At each instance we give you examples so that you are able to comprehend the technical language.

You will also come across underprivileged learners and learners with special needs. How would you understand and tackle some of the social and psychological issues that they may have? This block comprehensively helps you address all these encounters which you may had in your life in a sympathetic and empathetic manner.

In **Block 2: Listening and Speaking** we concentrate on what had hitherto been a sadly neglected area in formal teaching-learning. This block again gives you theoretical insights as well as lots of activities that you may use in the classroom. Assessment is also discussed.

In **Block 3: Reading Skill** we deal with different dimensions of reading at the elementary levels. We also discuss ways to enhance the vocabulary of children. Grammar teaching is dealt in a fun manner, integrating with the other language skills.

In **Block 4: Writing Skill**, we discuss in detail the different strategies for teaching writing to elementary school learners. The emphasis, as you will see, is on the process of writing rather than on the product. Once the children have understood the different stages of writing, it becomes easier for them to deal with different forms of writing.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This is the first block of CTE-104. In this block, we once again return to the main focus of our programme – the learner.

In the first unit: **The Young Learner**, we give you insights into the development of the personality, cognition and language development of the young learners. The teacher at the primary level has a serious responsibility because her learner is at a formative stage in life, and all the dimensions of her personhood – emotional, social, physical and intellectual are in the making.

In the second unit: **Emergent Literacy** we discuss the role of informal learning at home and in the formal sphere of the school.

In the third unit: **Teaching the Underprivileged Learner**, we try to help the teacher empathize with learners who may come from underprivileged social and economic backgrounds. For this, the teacher needs to identify upper class biases in the text books, testing system and teaching methodology.

There may be children in your class who may be ‘slow learners’ – and you may perhaps call them unintelligent. But have you ever considered that they could be having a minor disability which can be corrected if identified on time. In the fourth unit, **Language Based Learning Disabilities (LBLD)**, we help you identify such learners and suggest to you strategies of working with them.

Units in this block are:

Unit 1 The Young Learner

Unit 2 Emergent Literacy

Unit 3 Teaching the Underprivileged Learners

Unit 4 Language Based Learning Disabilities (LBLD)

We hope you enjoy reading this block and find it useful in your interaction with the students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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UNIT 1 THE YOUNG LEARNER

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The Child as a Language Learner
- 1.3 Early Literacy and Motivation in Learning L2
- 1.4 Characteristics of Young Learners
- 1.5 Opportunities to Hear and Use the Target Language
- 1.6 Storytelling and the Arts
- 1.7 Imaginative Play
- 1.8 Formats and Routines
- 1.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.10 Key Words
- 1.11 Suggested Readings
- 1.12 Answers

1.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit you will be able to:

- State the different ways a child learns language
- Compare the language learning motivation for L1 and L2
- Enumerate the qualities that characterize young learners
- State the role of the teacher in a young learners' classroom
- Describe the activities that are effective with young learners
- State the reasons why the activities mentioned are useful for young learners
- Organize classroom activities that would be conducive to learning

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language is the means by which children can 'explore their inner and outer spaces' (Karel Rose, 1982) for it helps to develop concepts, relationships and an understanding of relationships of not only people around but also objects across space and time. At the outset, as the young child is struggling to recreate the language it hears from the adults around, genetics and the environment plays a vital role in the child's acquisition of language. They need to be surrounded by language in different forms.

To be able to communicate children need a receptive audience. Thus, surrounded by a handful of caregivers who devote all their attention to the growing child, he or she eagerly launches on the language learning journey. Each new step acquired gives children control over their environment as they begin to ask for things, say 'no' to things, express their feelings and get things done. A child who is listened to, read to and responded to, begins to 'make connections between objects and sounds, experiences and words. (Karel Rose, 1982). In an attempt to figure out the complexities of the world outside,

the child makes connections and constructs the meaning of a certain utterance or behaviour in a social context. These strategies of listening, observing the social context, experimenting in a similar context, forming hypotheses and conclusions can be gainfully used and reinforced at school. During the course of this unit we shall look at how young learners learn language and what works best for them.

1.2 THE CHILD AS A LANGUAGE LEARNER

Entering school for the express purpose of learning is a turning point in the life of a child. During its pre-school years the child develops physical and conversational skills in unstructured circumstances, where her/his mistakes in language are met with gentle and affectionate suggestions and there is no conscious attempt on the part of the child to learn. Learning happens as a part of interaction with the environment.

Child already an efficient language user

We can say that a child who enters school is already an efficient language user of language for she can successfully communicate in her mother tongue or the language of home. She can ‘interpret, ask questions, negotiate, comment or wonder’ (Ashworth and Wakefield, 2005) and every new experience is something of a wonder to her. This is a great potential, which a sensitive teacher can exploit in the L2 (here, English) classroom. The teacher can encourage the child to share experiences of home or outside school, listen actively to what the child tells, ask questions, mirror expressions, make comments which tell the child that the teacher values her ideas and comments. This will help the learner to reflect upon what she knows and this would lead to creative thinking. It is important to note that since the child can successfully use difficult structures in L1 it is fruitful not to restrict learners to very simple language or very simple topics. In fact discussions can throw up a lot of new words and expressions that can be caught by the child as s/he tries to understand the meaning.

The role of the bilingual method in this situation is great as the language of the environment can be used to aid understanding and also assist the learner to transfer knowledge and understanding of one language to the other.

What the theorists say about the young learner

In order to understand the child as a learner of language let us briefly visit a few of the great psychologists, linguists and educationists and see what they have said on this topic. We shall read what Noam Chomsky, Jean Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner have said about language learning.

- a) Every human child has an innate capability of learning language

The limitations of the behaviourist view of acquisition led in the nineteen sixties to an alternative proposal, arising out of the generative account of language (Chomskian view). It was argued that children must be born with an innate capacity for language development. When a child is exposed to speech, certain general principles for discovering the structure of language automatically begin to operate. This capacity to learn language was labelled by Chomsky ‘language acquisition device (LAD).’

The child uses its LAD to make sense of the utterances heard around it and to make hypotheses about the grammar of that particular language. This knowledge is then used to produce language which after a process of trial and error, corresponds to adult speech (Crystal, 1987).

b) The child is an active learner

Jean Piaget said that the way a child functions in the world that surrounds her, influences her mental development. The child is constantly negotiating problems, trying out ways to solve it say, for example – taking the spoonful of food to her mouth. Here the child has to work out ways in which it can successfully direct the food into her mouth. This action is not imitation but is actively constructed by the child. He said that we solve problems internally by thinking them through so thought can be derived from the action. Thus for Piaget action is fundamental to cognitive development.

According to Piaget development takes place in two ways. These are **assimilation** and **accommodation**.

Assimilation is when the child who has mastered the art of directing the spoon to its mouth, is given a fork which it tries to use in a similar fashion for the purpose of eating. But later the child learns that the fork offers new possibilities of picking the food up i.e. by spiking it. This is accommodation, when the child adjusts its knowledge. Both these are adaptive processes of behaviour but they become processes of thinking.

‘Accommodation’ is an important idea ‘which involves restructuring and reorganization of the mental representation of language’ (Mc Laughlin, 1992). Piaget believed that the child’s thinking moves through a gradual growth of knowledge and intellectual skills towards a formal and logical thinking. But he believed that growth is punctuated with certain fundamental changes a child goes through. These are the stages of development and the child is capable of some types of thinking and incapable of others at a particular stage of its development.

Piaget’s four stages: Piaget’s stages are age-specific and marked by important characteristics of thought processes. They also include goals children should achieve as they move through a given stage.

Stage	Age	Characteristics	Goal
Sensorimotor	Birth to 18–24 months old	Motor activity without use of symbols. All things learned are based on experiences, or trial and error.	Object permanence
Preoperational	2 to 7 years old	Development of language, memory, and imagination. Intelligence is both egocentric and intuitive.	Symbolic thought
Concrete operational	7 to 11 years old	More logical and methodical manipulation of symbols. Less egocentric, and more aware of the outside world and events.	Operational thought
Formal operational	Adolescence to adulthood	Use of symbols to relate to abstract concepts. Able to make hypotheses and grasp abstract concepts and relationships.	Abstract concepts

Source: <https://www.healthline.com/health/piaget-stages-of-development#stages>

Piaget’s theory has been criticized on two accounts. One, he totally ignored the role played by language in mental development, since we need language even to think. And two, he neglected social interaction which is an important dimension of

children's lives. According to him the process of 'sense-making' or 'meaning-making' is a purely individual activity.

We can still take some of the principles of Piaget's theory which considers the world as offering opportunities for learning. We can make use of the environment to provide a setting for development as it offers opportunities to the child. This means that we must allow the child to do problem-solving by working with objects and ideas and enable her to make connections of her own.

c) The child as a social being

Vygotsky (1978) believed that the child is an active learner and a thinker. The child's individual efforts towards learning cannot be ignored but it is important to see this development as happening in the company of interacting adults. According to Vygotsky, language is a tool for learning and development. Language provides the child with a tool and opens up new opportunities for things, organizing information through words and symbols.

A young child, while organizing herself, speaks a lot to herself which can be called 'private speech'. As children grow older they speak less aloud but their 'inner speech' continues which regulates and controls behaviour. Adults also speak aloud when faced with a tricky task and we all know that all of us have an 'inner speech' which regulates our external speech and behaviour. The child is an active learner in a world full of other people who play an important role in helping children to learn. They bring objects and ideas to their attention. Adults talk to children while playing, they ask questions, read stories or simply give a running commentary while doing things together in daily life for e.g.

'Let us see which book we shall read... Shall we read 'Ugly Duckling'?.. Now where is 'Ugly Duckling'?.. There, in the corner.. that book with a baby duck on it... Let's take the book to the bed.. Do you want to hold the book?.. Here hold it like this. Good, Aliya is holding her book 'Ugly Duckling'.

In this way adults mediate the world for the children. All along there are words repeated of the objects in a situation which the child makes sense of and adds to her repertoire.

Vygotsky said that the ability to learn through instruction and mediation is characteristic of human intelligence. Children can understand much more with the help of adults than they would have done by themselves. This kind of guided and assisted learning was termed as 'zone of proximal development' where new actions are performed by children with assistance from an adult. Thus according to him intelligence can be better measured by what the child can do with skilled help. He even implied that children learn to think with the help of adults. Gradually children shift from reliance on others to independent action. And they shift from 'private speech' to 'inner-speech', when they shift from thinking aloud to thinking inside their heads. It is at this time they have 'internalized that particular bit of language'.

The implications for our L2 classroom would be the following:

- Greater interaction with the children
- Learning words as labels for new objects
- Teaching them to think that the new language too is a set of words

- Scaffolding by the teacher to ensure successful completion of the task
- Provide tasks so that the new language becomes a part of the child's language

d) Scaffolding and routines

Bruner also emphasizes the importance of the adult's role in a child's learning process. He also focuses on the importance of language in a child's cognitive development. According to Bruner an adult uses 'scaffolding' to guide the child's learning through 'fine-tuned talk' (Cameron, 2001).

Fine tuned talk is something we read earlier in which the adult talks about actions, objects, feelings etc. about a situation as they go through the process or the activity. Adults scaffold by creating an interest in the activity, breaking the task into small doable steps, pointing out the important parts of it, reminding them of the objectives of the task and by controlling the frustration of the child by showing, helping and guiding. We shall be reading about scaffolding in another section of the unit.

Check Your Progress 1

1. What kind of language skills does a child come with when she enters school? Can this ability be used as a resource in the classroom?

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2. In what ways is the child an active learner? Discuss with reference to the theories you have just read.

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3. What role do the adults play in the child's learning?

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1.3 EARLY LITERACY AND MOTIVATION IN LEARNING L2

Early Literacy

Emergent and early literacy are terms widely used in current educational literature. Let us look briefly at Emergent literacy. You will be reading more about it in the next unit.

Emergent literacy sums up the linguistic, numerical and print awareness that a child develops when exposed to a stimulated environment in her pre-school years. A child who is talked to, listened to, involved in play of language or otherwise, read to, sung to and provided trips and excursions, develops language and a better communication. This is the precursor to her motivation and ability in reading and writing which will determine her performance in later years.

Early literacy is when a child gradually becomes aware of the significance of written language in her environment. The child develops the understanding that objects or things, oral words (sounds), written words (letters) and symbols are interchangeable and may mean the same thing. An early awareness of writing is considered an integral part of children's early language development. It was earlier believed that letter recognition was a precursor to the skills of reading (decoding) and writing (decoding). This is not considered true anymore as a child learns to recognize symbols and words without any knowledge of letters of the language by making use of non-linguistic clues like objects, situations, time, relationships, purpose or location; this is the 'comprehensible input' that Krashen was talking about. The child notices written text in the environment and realizes that if one were to negotiate one's environment one must know how to write. She attempts to scribble in her own way trying to develop the ability to write, a skill she would need in order to become a member of the adult world.

Early literacy becomes significant in the Indian context since we find a co-existence of two or more languages in the environment. Names, boards, signages, instructions, labels, directions, warnings etc, are all present in the bilingual form in our surroundings. This means that if a child uses non-linguistic clues and cues to understand the symbols or text in a language, this would hold good for both the languages in the environment. Similarly, the languages co-exist even in the verbal use and the child gets to hear many words in L2 and internalizes the 'sounds' without realizing that certain words are not a part of her own language. This kind of familiarity would facilitate the learning of the new language, many words of which are familiar to the child.

The naming game

As the child starts school, a naming game in L2 begins. The child is given names of things, people, places, rooms and experiences which she must use appropriately as she recognizes or identifies things. This introduction to naming is dramatic and exaggerated and the child is overwhelmed by the profusion of new terms she must come to terms with. Often, the over emphasis on naming in the school tends to create anxiety in the child. Teachers should, instead, kindle their curiosity about the interesting things in the new surroundings without the stress of repeating everything correctly. A sensitive teacher can make the process of 'naming comfortable to the child by bringing understanding and order to the vast array of unfamiliar objects.' Thus we can see that understanding by making connections and constructing meaning and not memorizing is the key to the development of language at school. The bilingual method can be used judiciously here to make the process more efficient, along with the mother tongue and the target language.

Learning L2

We have already mentioned that the child who enters school at the age of 4 or 5 years is already an experienced language user. The development of thought and language has happened simultaneously in the home language and culture. The child

also develops an intuitive understanding of the grammar of the home language but when it comes to L2 there is a conscious attempt to isolate and understand grammar rules. “Language learning, on the other hand, refers to the “conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them.” (Stephen Krashen, 1981).

Since languages have many similarities it is easy for the child to transfer what she knows to a new context. From now on the development of home language and L2 takes place together.

By now the child has internalized that:

- language is made up of sounds,
- language is systematic wherein sounds, words or sentences are ordered in a particular way
- a language user can create new utterances by combining words and sounds,
- language serves various functions like requesting, asking, agreeing, warning, expressing emotions etc.
- there are different ways of saying the same thing in different languages or cultures (children are often aware of this)

Since with the use of language children begin to negotiate their environment and manipulate situations, they get a feeling of power and this motivates them to learn language.

The motivation to learn the home language is greater in the nurturing atmosphere where they are complimented and encouraged for their ‘vocal efforts’. Hence they make continuous attempts to communicate. Since the use of home language is immediately related to their needs and comforts, the motivation to further their use of their language is immense.

But in the school set-up there is an urgency to use English and children find it difficult to understand why they need to use L2 when they can make themselves understood perfectly in L1 (home language).

Other impediments come in the way. At home they learnt language as it came to them in different situations in an unstructured way but here at school they need to repeat and use only the particular language that the curriculum directs.

We have already discussed the emphasis on naming and a quick learning of a multitude of names. At home any effort at language use was treated with affection and encouragement but this may not be the case at school. The teacher may be impatient with a child who takes time to learn the correct language. There may be some chiding or ridicule on the part of the teacher.

The pressure to learn the new language (L2) is great and there is less sustained ‘comprehensible input’ or other non-linguistic clues. The child discovers another thing. She needs to communicate correctly using the correct form which the teacher is insistent upon. At home the caregivers understood what the child was trying to say and responded accordingly. They did not pay attention to form all the time. The insistence to form in school inhibits her desire to communicate.

The home language was learnt over the years with hardly any pressure and any little advancement in language was met with great enthusiasm. But at school there is the pressure of the teacher who is tied to the curriculum and the time-frame.

Then there is pressure of the parents who wish to find out how much of the new language she has learnt at school and are always on the lookout for demonstrable behaviour in that regard.

In addition to understanding the backdrop of language learning, it is important for a teacher to understand the distinguishing characteristics of young learners as well. This would enable her to create a learning environment conducive to language learning. Merely simplifying the language and the content while using general teaching methods, is not enough. There are certain methods which work with young learners and young learners alone. We shall learn the characteristics of young learners in the next section.

Check Your Progress 2

1. What is ‘Early Literacy’? How can a child gain an early literacy?

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2. How can a teacher facilitate vocabulary development in the target language?

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3. What factors may inhibit the child’s motivation to learn the L2?

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1.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG LEARNERS

According to Maria Jose Lobo, young learners are very receptive, curious, motivated and spontaneous. They also are willing to participate in different activities. In addition they are:

- able to pick up new sounds accurately
- physically active
- interested in themselves and on what is ‘here and now’
- deeply involved in the world of fantasy and imagination
- keen on learning by doing
- unable to concentrate for a long time

- happy with different materials
- developing their personality
- highly linked to their teacher

Given below are another set of characteristics identified by Slattery and Willis, 2001.

Children:

- are developing quickly into individuals
- learn in a variety of ways
- are not able to understand grammatical rules and explanations about language
- try to make sense of a situation by using non-verbal clues
- talk in their mother tongue about what they understand because doing this helps them learn
- can generally imitate sounds they hear quite accurately and copy the way adults speak
- are naturally curious
- love to play and use their imagination
- are comfortable with routines and enjoy repetition
- have quite a short attention span and so need variety

Keeping these characteristics in mind, let us consider what a teacher can do to help young learners.

Check Your Progress 3

1. How can a teacher make her lessons effective as she keeps in mind the characteristics of young learners?

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1.5 OPPORTUNITIES TO HEAR AND USE THE TARGET LANGUAGE

It is essential to create a learning situation similar to that of home language. This means that the learners need to be surrounded by language in its many forms. The teacher needs to talk to them a lot in English, especially about what they can see. The teacher can engage them in conversation or echo their narration of experiences, their remarks or comments in English. Since languages grow in each other's company a teacher must not exclude home language from the classroom. Instead

the teacher must allow them to share their experiences in their home language or ask questions in their home language. The teacher can respond in English and echo their sentences in mother tongue into English.

Taking a cue from pre-school language experiences, a teacher can indulge in a lot of fine-tuned talk as they work together on different activities. Any attempt at using English should be encouraged and complimented. Mistakes should not be pointed out as that would inhibit the students' communication. Children should want to take part in the activities involving the new language.

A teacher can create situations where the children are encouraged to construct meaning using the clues and cues of the situation - be it a story, games, films, songs, simulations and role-play. While speaking in English, the teacher should use gestures, actions or pictures to aid understanding and the process of 'meaning-making'. Most importantly, learning English has to be made enjoyable.

Check Your Progress 4

1. Mention different ways in which the teacher can surround the learner with L2 (English).

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1.6 STORYTELLING AND THE ARTS

Stories and narrative songs are a wonderful way of presenting language in an interesting way. Since stories are emotionally dynamic they become memorable. They allow the children to make sense of this world, human relationships, processes, emotions, motives, cause and effect and many other concepts. The story is so engaging that the children are lost in the world it represents, visualizing and responding emotionally to the situations in which the characters find themselves. Critical thinking is stimulated during and after the storytelling through questions and discussions. Stories also enable learners to pick up new vocabulary, new expressions and utterances which learners do in their own ways.

Songs, rhymes and chants are appealing due to their musical quality. It has been found that children enjoy choral singing as they can all pitch in without being noticed in case they are not confident of the language. Their voice merges with those of the others. In addition, the language of the songs is interesting and plays upon the sounds of the language which help the learners to obtain a better articulation.

Drawing and painting, when related to language tasks allows learners with different intelligences to express their understanding in non-linguistic ways. Similarly miming and role-play are also ways in which children can be fruitfully engaged in language use. These activities cater to the needs and different learning styles of learners: the visual, auditory and the kinesthetic.

Total response activities (TPR) include activities wherein children need to be physically active like action songs, role-play or games where they need to respond physically. This looks after their quality of being physically active. Games like 'Follow the Leader', 'Simon Says', 'Act it Out' are examples of such games.

One thing is common in all the above-mentioned activities. That is the element of fun. Children do not realize they are learning. They see it as having fun and since they are not under any stress, they learn many things in a natural way.

The more English they hear, repeat and read, they begin to see the grammar behind it and learn to use words and sentences correctly, very much like the acquisition of their home language.

Check Your Progress 5

1. What purpose does the use of variety in learning activities have in an English class?

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1.7 IMAGINATIVE PLAY

Children should get a lot of opportunity to use their imagination whether it is to predict the outcomes of an action or situation, or to visualize the scene they read or heard about; engage in role play assuming roles of different characters from stories or people from real life.

Some educationists believe in leaving the children alone when they are indulging in creative play. This allows them to think, negotiate meanings, exchange views and ideas with others in the group. The appearance or the intervention of the teacher may inhibit them. The teacher can keep a watch out of the corner of her eye and intervene when communication seems to be breaking down or when learners are not able to start off. The teacher can make suggestions or demonstrate ways to start the activity.

As the learners grow older they can be encouraged to distinguish between reality and fantasy, the possible and the impossible. They can be encouraged to read stories, comics or reading games. In order to assess understanding students can be asked to respond to questions, ask questions, describe, visualize, predict, draw, mime or play roles.

Their creativity can be inspired with problem-solving games, creative writing and experimenting with the language, its sounds and words and creating new expressions.

Check Your Progress 6

1. What role does imaginative play have in the language classroom? Which kind of learners benefit most from it?

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1.8 FORMATS AND ROUTINES

Bruner’s example of a routine is of parents reading to their children from infancy. A routine is something that is followed at the same time each day. When the child is very young she sits on her parent’s lap or close to the parent and looks at large picture books. The child is allowed to turn the pages. The parent points to the pictures, talks about what they can see, describe the characters and the objects. The child listens and responds with nodding. As the child grows older the parent asks tag questions (*The elephant has a big nose, doesn’t he?*) involving the child in talking about what they can see and are reading about. The parent points out many features of the characters of the story. On later occasions the child is asked to point out various things in the pictures. As the story is read and re-read the child gets to recognize names, words and pictures and pipes in with the parent, naming pictures and events. The key to the language development of the child is a lot of repetition by the parent, repetitive phrases and utterances in the story itself and the use of ‘fine-tuned language’ we talked about earlier.

The teacher in the classroom can indulge in story reading for a small group of children while the others are busy with other games. The teacher can use the facility of slides and the projector to create a virtual picture book on the wall. The repetitive text in the story allows the child to predict what is coming during the fourth or the fifth read-aloud experience. Soon the child joins in the storytelling. This allows the child to recognize words and sentences as well.

A teacher may read the story and ask questions about the characters or pictures, adding bits of her own. At times children can be allowed to complete the sentences that the teacher began.

Thus the teacher can have different times or days for different activities and vary them according to her objectives. There can be story time, rhyme time, quiz time, game time and ‘let’s think time’ or even ‘let’s draw’ or ‘read time’. Each routine would have a format – a pre-decided sequence of actions. Soon the children get used to the routines and begin to anticipate the activity time slots.

While preparing for the activity the teacher can do a lot of fine tuned talk while asking children to do things, help out, ask what they want to do and give instructions.

The advantage of routines and formats is that the context becomes familiar to the learners and they begin to predict the next action or the intention. The teacher can introduce novelty to the routine and so the new language is introduced in a familiar situation with new language adding on to old language. Even if the language becomes complex to the learners, the familiarity of the routine helps them to understand what the new language means. Here the zone of proximal development too comes into play as the support of the teacher helps the learners internalize new language.

Check Your Progress 7

1. Which kind of routines could you plan for in the curriculum for young learners? In what way do you expect your learners to benefit from them?

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1.9 LET US SUM UP

To conclude we can say that children who are energetic, motivated, curious but with a short attention span would benefit from different activities in the language classroom where they can experiment with the language they know and communicate without hesitation or fear. We have also learnt that we need to surround the learner with the new language and present it through interesting activities and situations so that they can construct the meaning themselves and through repeated exposure begin to internalize the new language. Needless to say, stories, poems, songs, anecdotes, creative tasks, collaborative activities, role play, and opportunities for meaning-making have immense potential in learning L2, namely English.

1.10 KEY WORDS

genetics	: the ways in which different characteristics are passed from each generation to the next, qualities inherited from the parents
acquisition	: the act of getting knowledge, a skill on own efforts or abilities (without the intervention of another person)
strategies	: plans intended to achieve something, here to understand
hypotheses	: an idea or explanation of something that is based on a few known facts but not yet proved.
unstructured	: not according to an organized plan
negotiate (the environment)	: find their way or function, find a way over a difficult path
social interaction	: interaction (talking and communicating) with other people
sense-making	: trying to understand the meaning with the help of situational and other clues
zone of proximal development	: the ability of a person to do or achieve something in the company of a more experienced or trained person, who guides or helps
scaffolding	: providing support to ensure successful completion of the task
early literacy	: an understanding that a child begins to have about the importance of written text in our lives and the environment
emergent literacy	: a readiness to read or write that a child gets when exposed to the sounds of the language, concept of numbers, conversation, stories, picture books, trips and excursions

internalizes	: belief, a learning that becomes a part of the way you think or behave (in this case the language that one uses)
bilingual	: using the two languages simultaneously
total physical response	: activities, songs or games in which the learner is physically involved as well

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1.12 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. The Young Learner comes with an efficient use of language and is able to:
 - communicate needs, remarks, feelings
 - interpret
 - ask questions
 - narrate incidents in simple language

Teacher can use these abilities in home language to encourage communication and provide English equivalents and help learners to transfer knowledge from one language to another by drawing correspondence.

2. The child is an active learner as s/he:
 - acquires language through observation, generalization and experimentation (LAD)

- is capable of inductive reasoning
 - negotiates the environment by attempting to solve problems and working out things for self (assimilation and accommodation)
 - interacts with adults in the environment and learns in their company and with their support
 - uses language to control her/his immediate environment
3. Adults help children in learning languages through :
- using language related to the situation (fine-tuned talk)
 - scaffolding and assisting
 - encouraging and complimenting vocal efforts
 - using opportunities to expose the child to a lot of language

Check Your Progress 2

1. Early literacy means that a child:
- becomes aware of the significance of written language
 - understands that things, pictures, symbols and written words are interchangeable in any language as far as meaning goes
 - ‘uses comprehensible input’ to understand new language
2. A teacher can aid vocabulary development by:
- bringing to the child’s notice all that is wonderful and interesting around her
 - creating a situation wherein the learner understands new language using non-linguistic clues
 - encouraging use of home language to communicate
 - mirroring the ideas in English
 - not being too critical of mistakes and not insist too much on form
3. Factors that may inhibit a young learner are:
- suddenly having a lot of names to repeat or remember in a discrete fashion (with no meaningful input)
 - the teacher’s ridicule or reprimand on mistakes
 - teacher’s insistence on correct form
 - insistence on English at all times

Check Your Progress 3

A teacher can do the following:

- surround the learner with English in various forms
- not insist on rules of grammar or direct attention to the rules of grammar
- use a variety of ways to introduce new language

- spiral the introduction of new language by code mixing and code switching
- make learning interesting through stories, songs, rhymes, games, activities that engage learners physically
- encourage divergent views and ways of thinking
- allow them to indulge in imaginative play
- have fun activities with the sounds of the target language
- listen to the learner as she communicates in her home language

Check Your Progress 4

1. A teacher can surround a learner with English in the following ways:
 - use a lot of fine-tuned talk
 - engage the learners in conversation
 - repeat the child's narrations in English
 - encourage learners to construct meaning
 - use stories and songs in English

Check Your Progress 5

1. Variety in the classroom
 - keeps interest alive as learners have a short attention span
 - learners can construct meaning on their own
 - addresses the different learning styles of learners
 - keeps them mentally, emotionally, intellectually and physically active

Check Your Progress 6

1. Imaginative play can involve:
 - role-play and simulations and the games that young children play at pretending
 - predicting outcomes of a situation in a story
 - visualize a character or a scene
 - creative speaking or writing tasks

Check Your Progress 7

1. Routines that a teacher can plan in the classroom can be:
 - having time slots for games, storytelling, reading, writing
 - going through a common procedure or steps so that children can predict them
 - use language while the activities are being done
 - do a lot of storytelling using large picture books
 - have corners in the classroom for drawing, reading books, writing etc.

UNIT 2 EMERGENT LITERACY

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Some Significant Components of Emergent Literacy
 - 2.2.1 Oral Language and Narrative Skills
 - 2.2.2 Vocabulary
 - 2.2.3 Phonological Awareness and Phonemic Literacy
 - 2.2.4 Shared Reading
 - 2.2.5 Letter Knowledge and Print Motivation
 - 2.2.6 Invented Spelling
 - 2.2.7 Number Knowledge
- 2.3 Parental Role in Child's Literacy
- 2.4 Teacher's Role in Developing Literacy
- 2.5 Interventions for Children with Inadequate Literacy
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Suggested Readings
- 2.8 Answers

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit you will be able to:

- State the significance of emergent literacy on the reading and writing skills of the learners
- Enumerate the components of emergent literacy
- Sustain the literacy development of young learners through focused activities
- Identify learners with poor literacy skills
- Organize activities to help develop the literacy skills of learners
- Guide and aid the parents in developing literacy skills of young learners

2.1 INTRODUCTION

What is emergent literacy?

Emergent literacy is a new term to conceptualize early reading and writing. This means that children attain knowledge about language, reading and writing before they enter school.

Children begin to learn from the day they are born. Interacting with their caregivers, they develop vocabulary and language which is rudimentary in the beginning but becomes increasingly complex as they grow.

Their gaining fluency in oral language and a growing understanding of the printed matter around them marks their preparedness to read and write (emergent literacy).

Emergent literacy skills develop in an accelerated manner if the children are given a literacy rich environment.

A literacy rich environment is one in which the children are surrounded by language and meaning in its myriad forms like: signs and symbols, books and toys, interaction with adults, stories, songs, fine-tuned talk and printed messages in the environment. Soon children learn to express their ideas and feelings through language. They also begin to understand that the printed text around them is meaningful and has a significant role to play in their lives. Interaction with print in its various forms like books, magazines, games and toys, signs, symbols, labels enables a growing recognition and appreciation of print which is the basic tool in reading.

Talking and listening to adults or adults reading books in an affectionate and caring environment, children develop a large vocabulary and narrative skills of their own which they use during ‘pretend-play’ or ‘pretend-read’ when they simulate situations in games or pretend to read a book, the story of which is well known to them. When children learn to hold books and learn that we read from left to right (or right to left or top to bottom depending on language learnt) and turn to the next page when the one in front is over, they are ready to read in the conventional sense.

A major concept of emergent literacy is that the skills of reading and writing develop simultaneously and are complementary to each other. When a child scribbles in an attempt to write or pretends to write is when the child is beginning to develop the knowledge of letters which in the printed text carry the sounds of the oral language. Thus many children try to write new words by inventing their spelling in their own unique way. When children begin to recognize words rhyme, or notice logos or street signs and can recreate stories they have heard, or reproduce songs and jingles, they are ready to read and write.

A child’s unconventional attempts at reading (pretending to read) or writing (scribbles) are seen as legitimate beginnings of literacy. Hence the term relates to both reading and writing. This means that children have got a feel of the language, have developed a positive attitude towards print and can engage with books constructively. It also means that children make meaning of the printed text not merely by decoding but by using other visual or contextual clues as well.

The emergent reader enters school and soon learns the skills of reading and writing in the conventional sense. Early childhood experiences play a decisive role in learning when the child is introduced to formal instruction.

2.2 SOME SIGNIFICANT COMPONENTS OF EMERGENT LITERACY

Language development is the key force behind the initiative to learn, read and write. Children who come to school with a well-developed language (home language) are more amenable to reading and writing and as a result expand upon their fund of concepts and learning. Though many forces and aspects come into play into this kind of development of the human child there are certain basic skills that children acquire given a rich literacy environment.

The basic skills that form the reading readiness amongst pre-school children are as follows:

- a) Oral communication and narrative skills

- b) Vocabulary
- c) Phonemic awareness and phonemic literacy
- d) Shared reading
- e) Letter knowledge and print motivation
- f) Invented spelling
- g) Number knowledge

We shall consider each one and see how it contributes to the reading and learning readiness of the young learner.

2.2.1 Oral Language and Narrative Skills

A child keenly observes things around, listening and absorbing and trying to make sense of the environment around it. In literate and urban homes where the environment is rich with language in different oral forms, the child quickly develops a rich vocabulary and acquires the grammar of the language. In order to achieve this, the parents need to constantly talk to the child (fine-tuned talk you have read about in Unit 1), talking about what they are doing and repeating words and sentences relevant to the situation. Parents can help to develop the child's vocabulary by pointing to things, people, signs and symbols, print in and around the house or during short trips outside the house and talking about them.

The tradition of telling stories, singing songs, using rhymes and playing with sounds of the language goes a long way in developing the child's oral language. Children get an understanding about their own language and how it works. They slowly begin to internalize the grammar and recognize rhyming words. As they grow up they begin to spin stories around their toys or begin to pretend to play adult roles in their free play. All this hones their oral language and narrative skills. Not only this, if parents and children discuss the characters after the story is read, this helps the children to make sense of this world, understand various aspects of life and living. Even the play of sounds in an interesting manner helps to develop their understanding of sounds; and that the oral language is made up of a string of sounds and when these sounds are put together in different ways they lead to different meanings.

Piaget has said that children have an innate desire to communicate. An environment where the parents or caregivers are ready to listen to them and be involved in conversation and respect the children's queries by answering them is conducive to the development of the children's oral communication and narrative skills. These become both refined and complex as the children grow. Development of oral skills and cognitive skills are simultaneous and interrelated.

When children listen to stories which have a lot of conversations and dialogues, they perceive the printed text first as an extension and representation of oral language. Later they begin to notice the difference between written language and the spoken language and develop an appreciation for the written language in the text they read or are read to.

2.2.2 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is an integral part of one's language. We shall in this section see how parents help their young children to develop a rich vocabulary.

We have already discussed how parents and caregivers help to develop the oral communicative skills of children. The repertoire of a child's vocabulary gets richer when parents point to things around them, name them and talk about them. Similarly, while reading, the parent points to the words, pictures or images and talks about them. This enables the child to learn names of things, actions or qualities in an interesting manner. It is thus important to expose the child to images and pictures.

Parents read aloud to children and this helps to develop background knowledge about various topics and enhance their vocabulary. These would be later employed in reading and reading strategies by the children. Children also become familiar with the rich language patterns of written language used in the stories. The repeated words and phrases are soon learnt by the child.

Songs and rhymes are also a nice way to learn vocabulary especially when accompanied with music and gestures. As discussed earlier, a parent or caregiver can enable a child to learn the names of various things while looking after the child. Say, for example, while feeding the child the parent might use words/phrases like: nice, hot, spoon, munch, sweet mango, Amit likes apples, open your mouth, wipe your face, finish your milk quickly, and yummy custard, etc.

Vocabulary can be enhanced by making the home environment print-rich and by taking the child out on short trips showing him/her things and people around and talking about them and directing the child's attention to the printed signs and messages around. Children learn the words as they construct meaning around them using different kinds of cue and clues.

Social interaction too helps to develop understanding and enhance their vocabulary.

2.2.3 Phonological Awareness and Phonemic Literacy

As the child's language skills develop, the child becomes aware that spoken words are made up of individual sounds. By playing with sounds and replacing one sound with another to get new words or by playing rhyming games the child becomes aware of the role of sounds in communication. Some of the phonemic awareness is developed on its own and for some the child needs the parent or the caregiver to provide examples by using a few words that carry the same sound and which are names of things/actions which are accessible to the child.

Children go through several categories of phonological skills as their literacy develops. They begin by thinking of rhyming words or identifying words that rhyme.

At a later stage they learn to blend phonemes and make new words or sounds like /e/ and /ɪ/ (/eɪ/), /e/ and /m/ (/em/) or /e/ and /t/ (/et/). Later they substitute the sounds to make further combinations. Gradually they move to more difficult task of splitting words into phonemes and notice that the word bin is made up of /b/, /ɪ/ and /n/. This helps them to create new words by manipulating the phonemes. (bat – mat – map – cap – cat).

This understanding of phonemes allows them to figure out the pronunciation of new words by using their phonemic knowledge. As they begin to read, they learn to translate the written words back into sound and its meaning.

2.2.4 Shared Reading

Reading aloud to children and then discussing the story or the characters with them is of utmost importance. "The single most important activity for building the

knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. This is especially so during the preschool years,” (p. 23, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson (1985)).

A parent sits with the child, reading aloud from a large picture book allowing the child to understand the story with the help of the pictures. At first the child tries its best to understand the plot with the help of the pictures and the intonation pattern of the reader. Children use different cues and clues to construct the meaning of what they hear.

While reading, the parent points to different images and pictures as he or she reads, helping the child to understand the new vocabulary. The parent also points to the words as he or she reads. Soon in books with repetitive text the child learns to recognize certain words and joins in the story telling. Rereading of stories also enables the child to become familiar with the unique concepts of the story.

Shared reading also enables a child to become familiar with the different aspects of books and other printed matter. They learn that we read from left to right and top to bottom, thus knowing when to turn the page. Slowly the parent allows the child to hold the book and turn the pages. This creates in the child awareness about a printed text and a positive attitude towards reading.

In addition, the child, through discussions on various aspects of the story also develops background knowledge and an understanding of the world and human relationships. This stimulates thinking. Thus reading aloud helps children develop in four areas that are important to formal reading instruction, namely oral language, cognitive skills, and concepts about print and phonemic awareness. Reading aloud to children also helps to develop their vocabulary which would help them in reading comprehension later in life. Listening to stories being read aloud and looking at the print helps the children to become familiar with the language patterns and to understand what written language is.

Story time can include a variety of reading materials like books, magazines, alphabet books, books on rhymes, newspapers and a variety of pictures with text. Access to these helps the children to become emergent readers which will enable them to make a smooth transition to become conventional readers.

2.2.5 Letter Knowledge and Print Motivation

In a literacy rich environment, the child is surrounded with different examples of print beginning with books, games, magazines, pictures, posters, labels, directions, name boards, signs and symbols. Through repeated encounters with the text the child slowly develops the concept of letters and begins to understand that letters stand for the sounds of the language. Thus phonemic awareness enables the child to notice word boundaries, blend letters to create words and later split the words.

Phonological awareness helps the child to understand the alphabetic principle and the regular ways in which letters represent sounds.

Through exposure to the printed text in story reading sessions or other encounters with the text, children begin to understand that reading and writing have a communicative purpose like reading directions and signs, reading letters and emails, reading recipes, reading instructions in a booklet, reading the information on products, etc.

Meaningful encounters make them positively inclined towards print. They gain an interest in books and can talk about stories and connect the new information with their

background knowledge. The child begins to understand that it is through print we read stories and poems.

In brief pre-school children know a lot about printed language and are able to identify signs, symbols, logos and labels, knowing very well that all these have a direct bearing on their lives. They have also learnt that words can be segmented into sounds and syllables which are represented by the letters.

When they enter school, children would have learnt the following about print:

- Print carries a message whether in a story or on a road sign.
- Print is related to the world.
- Books are organized with a cover, title, author and reading flows in a particular and consistent direction.
- Print and drawing are different.
- Print may represent spoken language.
- Printed language consists of letters, words and sentences. These are marked with punctuation marks.
- Every printed material has a beginning and an end.
- Print occurs in different places.

Emergent readers look forward to books and reading and make early attempts to write through their scribbling. They try to make sense of their environment by trying to decipher print around them.

2.2.6 Invented Spelling

The term invented or temporary spelling is used for a child's attempt to spell a word using knowledge of the spelling system of his or her language. Using invented spelling helps them to explore written language and experiment with writing. Children often use graphophonics (letter/sound associations) while attempting to write. This early writing is a valuable developmental indicator of the spelling patterns the child has internalized.

Often teachers try to correct every word and remind the child that the spelling of certain words is incorrect. Such over-correction discourages the child. It has been seen that children who begin writing with invented spelling continue to write and like to write and that they soon settle down to conventional spelling which is developed by further reading and encounters with the printed text.

Often young children believe that words should show some figural resemblance to their meaning. They also believe that words should have a number of letters. During one experiment by Pick, Unze, Brownell, Drozdal, and Hopmann (1978), three year old children rejected all two letter words as non-words. But slightly older children put all the words they could read into the word pile and the words they could not read into 'non-word' pile.

This is because the child views reading and writing in a different way than the adult.

2.2.7 Number Knowledge

Emergent readers when they enter school have a fairly good concept of numbers also and can differentiate between the numbers of things. They are able to count to a certain number and have a concept of 'more' or 'less' in objects.

This skill also develops through constant interaction with the environment and other adults. An understanding of road signs, telephone numbers, house numbers and counting is developed through direct experiences.

Check Your Progress 1

Based on your reading of the earlier sections answer the questions given below:

1. What skills would emergent readers have already acquired when they come to school?

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2. What do you understand by a literacy rich environment?

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3. What are the different ways in which a preschool child develops oral and narrative skills?

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4. An emergent reader has a good vocabulary. How does the child acquire this vocabulary?

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5. What is shared reading? How does it influence a child's reading readiness?

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6. How does knowledge of phonemes and phonology help the child develop language skills?

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2.3 PARENTAL ROLE IN CHILD'S LITERACY

Studies have revealed that there is a positive relationship between family culture, environment and a child's reading achievement. Early readers have been found to have been brought up in literacy rich environments. Not only that, children who grow up in an affectionate environment with members of the family interacting with the child during most of its waking time, soon develops language and learns to express ideas and feelings using language.

A pre-school child spends most of its time with parents or caregivers. It passes through the stages of emergent literacy in different ways and at different ages.

During infancy the parents can promote early literacy using the following methods:

- Introducing the child to the concept of books by providing cloth or card board books which will not get spoiled by the child's handling. These books would have a cover, pictures and some text which the parent can read and talk about.
- Showing images to the infant while talking about them.
- Reading aloud books of rhymes especially the ones which have music, rhyme and rhythm and repetitive text like a refrain of a song.
- Pointing to things in the environment and naming them for the child.
- Pointing to words in the environment like signs, directions and explaining the meaning of the words.
- Singing to the child.
- Fine-tuned talk related to whatever they are doing together like eating, bathing, playing or strolling in the neighbourhood.

When the child is a little older and has begun to toddle around and speak a few sentences, the parents can do the following:

- Surrounding the child with large picture books, pop-up books, magazines and games.
- Reading aloud simple stories with one central character and a simple plot.
- Answering the child's queries about things around, events in the stories or about print in the environment. Listening to and talking with the child to promote language development.
- Sharing and exploring the reading materials with children. Encouraging children to retell stories.
- Looking at labels on food boxes, tins or packets and encouraging them to watch and discuss television shows.
- Encouraging a child to write by giving crayons, writing material, pencils or markers and drawing and writing with the child.
- Encouraging children to draw pictures or 'write' about (mainly scribbles) the stories they have heard.
- Presenting to the child a role-model by taking time to read and write.

- Visiting books stores and libraries with children. Borrowing books on their behalf.
- Help to develop a phonological and phonemic awareness through rhymes, play upon sounds and fun with sounds.

Basically parents who are sensitive to the need for reading and writing and who make every effort to provide the child with books and colourful material that is attractive and spend time reading and talking about the stories, things or objects, create a positive attitude amongst their children towards print and reading. In addition, an affectionate environment at home develops in the child a self confidence that allows it to experiment and learn new things.

2.4 TEACHER'S ROLE IN DEVELOPING LITERACY

The teacher must be familiar with the concept of emergent literacy so that he or she can identify the learner's specific needs and ascertain the level of literacy with which a child enters school. The teacher can then plan intervention activities to improve the child's literacy.

In general, the pre-school being an extension of home, the teacher can simulate the literacy-rich environment of home by surrounding the children with different kinds of print material, lot of pictures and colourful print material on the walls of the classroom and by reading aloud to the children as often as possible. The other things a teacher can do are:

- Organize fun activities that do not require memorization.
- Fun activities to enhance the children's awareness of sounds with rhymes, word play (sound segmentation, sound substitution and sound deletions) and chants like pat-tap, pat-mat-fat, fat-mat-pat, belt-bell, floor-flow, train-tray.
- Singing of rhymes especially that include word play and repetition like the rhyme 'The wheels of the bus go round, round and round/The wipers of the bus go swish, swish, swish' or 'Five little monkeys jumping on the bed/ Four little monkeys and so on.
- Encourage interaction amongst the children.
- Organize activities that allow the children to experiment with language. For example: Meera loves apples/oranges/cats/ bags (substituting words), Mummy eats/cooks/buys/ likes peas etc.
- Finger play with sand and clay.
- Reading aloud to the children and encouraging them to retell the stories.
- Discussions on stories, the plot and the characters.
- Using riddles, chants and nursery rhymes.
- Talking about words so that children understand that words are used to express ideas.

The other things a teacher can do is to label the objects in the classroom, put up a list of the students' names on the wall and the significant dates including the birthdays of the students.

While selecting literature for their classes, teachers can ensure that the following elements are present in the stories, poems, magazines or rhymes:

- Predictability in the form of repetitive phrases
- Contextual support in the form of pictures and description of situation
- Presence of high frequency words
- Presence of decodable words (with one letter-one sound association) like pin, tip, pill, lip

Teachers can organize word play activities, letter activities, help the children explore the books and focus attention on the role of letters in reading and writing. Children should also be exposed to varied forms of literature like stories, poems, simple expository texts on science, etc.

2.5 INTERVENTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH INADEQUATE LITERACY

Children at risk

A teacher can look for certain symptoms that indicate that a child is at risk in the acquisition of literacy skills. Having ascertained the needs of the child, the teacher can use the relevant methods discussed in the previous section to help develop literacy.

Some of the indicators of inadequate literacy amongst children entering school are the following:

- Low language and communication skills
- Inadequate phonemic awareness and poor phonological processing
- Low letter-knowledge
- Inability to do literacy tasks satisfactorily like naming pictures, colours of objects in rapid succession
- Not being conscious of the presence of print in the environment
- Not being interested in books
- In the context of English, comes from a home where English has no presence

This condition may be due to low socio-economic status wherein parents themselves have inadequate language due to illiteracy and few experiences of interacting with people who have fluency over the language. It is possible that the child from such a home has low print awareness and may not have had desired print experiences.

A child in the urban set up too, may come with inadequate literacy when the child has been exclusively brought up by a semi-literate caregiver, employed for the purpose by parents who are too busy to devote time to their child.

Children with developmental disorders, inadequate language skills from poor homes with inadequate literacy environment are likely to have difficulty in reading and writing. This may lead to learning problems as well. Such children would display difficulty in learning and remembering names of letters including those in their own names, understanding simple directions, low interest in nursery rhymes or stories and low social skills.

Interventions

The teacher can try all the methods mentioned in the previous section but especially for the children at risk the teacher can do the following:

- Focus on phonemic awareness through activities and games on a one-to-one basis. For example, pat /pæt/, pan /pæn/, tall /tɔ:l/ using oral activities or through letter cards or plastic letters.
- Organize activities based on sound-symbol relationship like allowing the learner to sound out the words by translating the letters into sound (Letters: chin) (Sounds: tʃɪn).
- Organize word-play activities (like sound substitution, sound deletion and phonemic segregation) as above.
- Read aloud to the child and engage the child in discussion through questions and thus impress upon the child that words are used to express ideas for example asking questions like, ‘How did Baby Bear say that he did not have any porridge to eat?’ (Someone has eaten all my porridge) or ‘How did Gingerbread Man tell the animals that he did not want to be eaten?’ (Run, run, as fast as you can. You can’t catch me. I’m Gingerbread Man/Stop, stop, I want to eat you).
- Provide frequent and varied exposure to literature.
- Make the child conscious of the print in the environment.
- Listen to what the child has to say with attention and engage the child in conversation to develop its communication skills and raise self-esteem.

In general the teacher could also take the following steps.

- Attract the child to the classroom through fun and doable activities.
- Build a strong school-home partnership and counsel the parents regularly, especially semi-literate or illiterate parents.
- Ensure that abundant print material is available to the child in the school.
- Create opportunities for the child to speak, read and write through interesting communicative tasks and making reading and writing material readily available in the classroom.

In schools for the low socio-economic group, there may be less resources like books and toys and the classroom walls may have less print, symbols and pictures, and print may not be integrated across the curriculum and words may be taught within the confines of the subject and not linked to other subjects. If the choice of books is low then the teacher too has limited books to read and provide the children with the experiences related only to the few books available.

A teacher can improvise by using other print material easily available in the environment like labels, advertisements, or text found on instructions, directions, warnings, etc. The teacher can improvise toys out of cardboard, paper (cut outs, origami, finger puppets), cloth (puppets of all kinds) or out of wood or other waste material.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Mention briefly what parents of a newborn child needs to do during its formative years to ensure that their child faces no difficulty in reading, writing and learning in the formal school.

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2. What are the symptoms that indicate that the child is likely to develop difficulty in reading, writing and remembering?

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3. What are the interventions that a teacher can make to accelerate the emergent literacy of children in the early years of schooling?

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have seen that the most significant years in a child’s career in reading, writing and learning are the pre-school years, the experiences of which decide whether the child will be a good reader or writer. In a multicultural society like ours it is possible that the child who enters school does not have the necessary skills of an emergent reader due to various reasons. The teacher can here play the role of a surrogate parent and through exposure to a literacy rich environment in the classroom help to develop the literacy skills of the child. It may also be remembered that this kind of literacy does not begin and end in one’s childhood alone, it continues throughout life. English being a second language, it is understood that many children will enter school with little or no knowledge of the language. But if a child had acquired the home language well before coming to school and is aware of the regional language, picking up the skills of English would not be very difficult. It is also important for the parents to make the child conscious of the presence of English, which is ubiquitous in the Indian environment.

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Teale, W. and Sulzby, E. eds. 1986. *Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Some Internet Sites

<http://stayathomeeducator.com/encouraging-emergent-literacy>

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/emergent-literacy.htm>

2.8 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. The emergent readers would have already acquired the following skills when they come to school:
 - developed oral language and narrative skills
 - a good repertoire of vocabulary
 - print awareness and print motivation
 - phonological awareness and phonemic awareness
 - ability to understand stories, think and discuss
 - ability to appreciate print in the environment
 - invented spelling
 - number knowledge
2. Home or school environment which provides the opportunity to:
 - look at and decipher print around the child
 - look at books, magazines, pictures and talk about them
 - handle books
 - listen to stories, look at pictures and discuss them
 - chant and sing
 - use sounds of the language in different forms through different activities
 - listen and talk about various topics
 - fun activities that make the child aware of the language

3. The different ways in which a preschool child develops oral and narrative skills are:
 - through daily conversation
 - through observing and listening to adults talk about the things around at home or outside home
 - by listening and retelling of stories
 - by talking about things in the environment
 - by listening to fine-tuned talk of adults around
 - by interacting and engaging with a caring environment
4. The child acquires this vocabulary when parents or caregivers:
 - constantly talk to the child and use vocabulary related to the situation, like day to day activities
 - point to things in the environment, name them and talk about them
 - point to pictures in the books while reading aloud
 - read aloud from both story and non-fiction books
 - point to words as they read aloud
 - answer the child's questions
 - use literature which has predictable text and repetition
5. When a parent or caregiver reads aloud from a large picture book (story or non-fiction), pointing to words and pictures as he or she reads:
 - child looks at the print and the pictures and tries to understand the basic plot
 - child discovers more concepts based on the story in repeated readings
 - child asks questions about the things, characters or situation and is given logical answers
 - child learns to handle a book and get concepts about print and the flow of ideas
 - child learns that words are used to represent ideas
6. The knowledge of phonemes and phonology helps the child develop language skills in the following ways:
 - child learns that language is made up of words which represent ideas and words in turn are made up of individual sounds which are combined in different ways
 - child understands the letter-sound relationship of his/her own language
 - child can identify sounds and successfully do sound play (by substituting sounds, adding sounds, deleting sounds and later segmenting the sounds of the word)
 - these skills are useful when the child has to decode the words while reading.
 - phonological awareness facilitates reading

Check Your Progress 2

1. Parents of a newborn need to:
 - engage in conversation.
 - provide opportunity to listen to language.
 - surround the child with picture books, games and toys.
 - read aloud to the child and talk about the stories.
 - point to words and pictures in the books and talk about them.
 - engage the child in word play or songs involving word play, rhymes and symbols.
 - take the child outdoors and point to print in the environment and talk about them.
 - answer queries of the child with respect.
2. The symptoms that indicate that the child is likely to develop difficulty in reading, writing and remembering could be:
 - low motivation to read
 - poor letter knowledge
 - inability to play sound based games
 - lack of interest in books and listening to stories
 - poor social skills
 - not conscious of the print in the environment
3. To accelerate the emergent literacy of children in the early years of schooling the teacher can:
 - make the class environment literacy-rich with various kinds of literature
 - put up print and pictures on the classroom walls
 - engage the children in sound-letter games
 - engage them in singing, chanting and finger play
 - read aloud stories from books and hold discussion on the stories
 - allow children to handle books
 - guide and support the parents in providing literacy
 - make the classroom an active and fun place to attract the child

UNIT 3 TEACHING THE UNDERPRIVILEGED LEARNERS

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Underprivileged Learners
 - 3.2.1 Who are the Underprivileged Learners?
 - 3.2.2 What Makes Them Underprivileged?
 - 3.2.3 Characteristics of Underprivileged Learners
- 3.3 Underprivileged Learners and the System of Education
 - 3.3.1 A Brief History of the Education of the Underprivileged
 - 3.3.2 Some Interventions
- 3.4 Teaching English to the Underprivileged Learners
 - 3.4.1 The Need for English amongst the Underprivileged
 - 3.4.2 Problems Faced by Underprivileged Learners in Learning English
 - 3.4.3 How to Help the Underprivileged Learners
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Suggested Readings
- 3.7 Answers

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will enable you to:

- Understand the underprivileged learners and their problems in learning English.
- Appreciate the government interventions in providing quality education to the underprivileged.
- Bring about the required reinforcement in the curriculum, teaching methods and socialization techniques in the classroom.
- Employ strategies that make learning effective and meaningful for the underprivileged learners.
- Develop a positive attitude towards the underprivileged learners.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In any learning situation one comes across differences in the students' cultures, socio-economic strata, home backgrounds, learning abilities and pre-school exposure to the English language. Addressing this variety of capabilities, attitudinal biases, self esteem quotients, experiential knowledge is the system of education that hopes to bring changes not only in the amount of knowledge gained by the learners but also abilities to do so. It also aims to develop in the learners the ability to think, acquire habits, skills and attitudes that would help them to be socially productive, socially accepted and adjusted.

Education has an empowering effect for it enables people to develop a critical questioning attitude towards society, government, gender and cultural stereotypes. These critical thinking skills are well developed amongst the middle class learners or learners from affluent homes for they are provided ample opportunities in the school that address these skills.

Amongst the wide spectrum of learners are certain learners who are at disadvantage by way of economic means, health status, appropriate experiences and background. They may be poverty stricken, culturally deprived, living in remote areas or on the fringes of society having barely any means to obtain a good education. In such a situation, learning English becomes a difficult task for them as they have little or no previous experiences, limited communication ability, no exposure to the language and very little means to do so.

This unit will address the needs of these learners whom we shall term 'disadvantaged learners'.

3.2 THE UNDERPRIVILEGED LEARNERS

Before you begin reading the Unit here are a few questions for you to answer.

1. What kind of learners do you teach?
2. Would you call them disadvantaged?
3. What problems do they face in learning?
4. Have you been treating them differently from other learners?
5. If you have not been teaching the middle class or the affluent, have you have any occasion to work with, observe or interact with the disadvantaged learner? What were your observations?

3.2.1 Who are the Underprivileged Learners?

The term 'underprivileged' is used to refer to the disadvantaged section of people who are economically, socially or geographically backward. They are in an unfavourable position compared to other sections of society since they do not have access to proper nutrition, proper health care, proper education and skill development. This may be due to poverty, cultural disadvantage because they are an ethnic minority or being in inaccessible areas where facilities of schooling are not adequate.

They have been referred to as 'deprived', 'psycho-socially deprived', 'culturally deprived', 'locationally deprived' or 'socio-economically deprived'. Due to a variety of reasons they do not have the experiences to gain knowledge, have a stunted communication system as they have not been exposed to fluent adult language users or have had a very limited interaction with the others in society which keeps them at the fringes.

3.2.2 What Makes Them Underprivileged?

The causes of the backwardness of such learners can be many as we have mentioned above.

(i) Poverty

Poverty is a major cause of disadvantage and backwardness. Due to lack of means such learners are deprived of many experiences and opportunities. They may have

working parents who have very little time to interact or talk to them. Moreover, the language repertoire of the parents can be very limited. Hence the experiences that a pre-school child requires to become a good communicator, reader or writer are missing. Emergent experiences such as conversation with parents and those around, letter knowledge, sound knowledge, access to books and toys, stories and rhymes and songs, numerical knowledge, which are a part of any middle class child's life, are missing in the lives of these children. We can say that they are under-stimulated.

In addition to this, there is a major problem caused by malnutrition. Their poor health status does not allow them to make full use of their intelligence. In addition, differential treatment is meted out to them at school where the teachers believe that they would not be able to understand or handle the content meant for the common learner. Hence they get a diluted exposure in the classroom too. This further hampers their growth.

(ii) Discrimination and exploitation

The exploitation of the less privileged by the more privileged and powerful classes of society has its roots in history. Similarly, the biases against these sections reduce the availability of opportunities, and increase the likelihood of their being exploited. In fact, the education system in any culture is largely targeted at the middle class and hence is based on the privileged culture. The underprivileged's culture does not form part of the content of the textbooks. The teaching methods work on assumptions of certain pre-knowledge and skills which the marginalised lack. Hence the gap in the learning situation keeps on growing. This inability to handle content or learning situations as well as their peers in the classroom creates in them a poor self-image. This further creates a negative attitude towards school, ultimately leading to a drop in their achievement and being pushed out of school.

(iii) Geographical or locational disadvantage

The underprivileged normally live in remote rural areas which are inaccessible, beyond the reach of schools. If they live in slums which in themselves are islands cut off from the facilities, advantages and opportunities that the city offers. The electronic media has reduced this alienation to a large degree for these people are now aware of many things that form the lifestyle of the middle class.

(iv) Culturally disadvantaged

The 'culturally disadvantaged' may belong to ethnic minorities, certain demographic groups like the slum dwellers or tribes untouched by education. They have poor stimulus for learning and their exposure to English, even though it is very much a part of the environment just beyond their dwelling, is negligible.

3.2.3 Characteristics of Underprivileged Learners

Psychologists and educationists have stressed the need for the right environment for the cognitive, social and emotional development of a child in its early years. It has also been proved that intelligence is developed with the help of interaction with society and acquisition of language. If the environment is rich with varied stimuli, the child is better able to observe, imitate, experiment and generalize. Language and mental development occur simultaneously. But the home environment is often deprived of stimuli that might lead to language or cognitive growth. There is deprivation caused by poverty; poor communication skills due to limited language use or limited interaction with parents, who are battling with the basic problems

of living. But at the same time life provides them many experiences that make them emotionally mature, hardworking and responsible. These are their hallmarks.

Some of the characteristics common amongst underprivileged learners are listed below:

(i) Low cognitive abilities

As we have discussed earlier, the underprivileged learner lacks intellectual stimulation at home as well as at school. Without the necessary foundation in speaking, reading and writing skills, the learner is poorly equipped for a successful education in any of the subjects, especially language, which is instrumental in learning other subjects.

Cognitive abilities, which are necessary to function at the level of abstraction and the abilities to perceive and formulate concepts are inadequately developed in the underprivileged learner. This learner is unable to learn in a symbolic way or solve problems using a hypothesis. The home situation provides the learner with skills but these are the skills of working with one's hands, operating simple machines or completing simple chores of different kinds. The school curriculum expects the learner to use critical thinking skills which need concepts, association, manipulation of ideas or principles which the learner is not able to do.

Even at school, opportunities to use critical thinking skills are not provided, for the teachers tend to think that the learner will not be able to handle them. So the basic classroom experiences are based on rote, memorization and drills. If opportunities for critical and analytical thinking are not provided from the early classes the learner would not be able to handle the abstraction required in the curriculum of the later classes. The gap widens and the learner is unable to keep pace with the others in the classroom. This leads to frustration and low self esteem.

(ii) Poor linguistic ability

The underprivileged learners lack experiences that generate ideas about what they can talk or write. In addition to the experiential deficiency, they often have poorly-developed verbal patterns. This deficiency in language is caused due to inadequate social interaction. This deficiency comes in the way of understanding what the teacher says in class or what the text contains, these being in fluent standard language beyond the reach of the learner.

English appears very alien to these learners and there is a gap between the learners, their teachers and the texts. This language deficit hampers the development of high-level cognitive analytical abilities because the student is always kept at the remedial level, and is being drilled the basics of language which largely comprise grammar. The curriculum too for such learners is made so simple that some of these higher order thinking skills are not developed at all.

(iii) Low self-esteem

Underprivileged learners feel that they are not able to cope with the content and the language in the classroom. Moreover, the textbooks are written more for the middle class learners and hardly have any representation about their lives in these books. This leads to a negative attitude about self, own culture, people and language. There is an implicit segregation as the students of other social classes, castes and races do not mix with them. This subtle rejection also contributes to their low self-esteem.

(iv) Involvement Gap

Underprivileged learners have been found to have low motivation to learn. Not only do they find the curriculum difficult to transact but also feel the absence of academic support in their home environment as well, which may be caused by illiteracy or long working hours of their parents. This leads to an involvement gap as there is ‘distancing between what the student perceives as his or her relevant life experiences and what is taking place inside the school.’ They feel that the learning is aimed at the interactive milieu of the middle class and that the teachers do not accept them as full members of the class. Often they are not involved in the discussions as the teachers subtly make them feel that they would not be able to contribute. They watch the class go by and feel that all that is happening in the classroom is not relevant to their lives and thus lose interest and their involvement and performance both get affected. This distancing process happens from one class to the next.

(v) Poor ability to read or write

As discussed earlier, the underprivileged learners do not get the requisite experiences that form the foundation of reading and writing skills, like interaction with mature users of language, exposure to toys or print material, listening to songs and stories, experiences of visiting places and observing their environment. As a result they do not come prepared to receive the instruction provided in school. Their verbal patterns and expressions are deficient even in their own language and this causes a hindrance in their learning of L2. Having poor communication skills, negligible print or phonemic awareness, they have difficulty in reading and writing.

(vi) Their strengths: Higher sense of responsibility and emotional maturity

In spite of their stunted knowledge base or linguistic abilities, the underprivileged learners are better than their peers in the classroom. Having shared the responsibilities of life, like working for a livelihood or looking after their younger siblings, sharing chores with their parents, they develop certain skills and a sense of responsibility. Having faced the hardships of life, they are more mature emotionally and can put in hard work and face hardships. Many underprivileged learners who have had to fend for themselves also display a great sense of independence and some amount of decision-making skill as well. The system of education needs to exploit these strengths of these learners to enable them to learn.

Check Your Progress 1

1. Who would you call an underprivileged learner?

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2. What are the causes of their deprivation?

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3. Which characteristics stand in their way of learning? Describe them in a sentence or two.

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4. Describe the strengths that underprivileged learners have. How could a teacher use them beneficially in the classroom?

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3.3 UNDERPRIVILEGED LEARNERS AND THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

3.3.1 A Brief History of the Education of the Underprivileged

‘According to a government estimate, out of 200 million children in the age group of 6 to 14 in India, around 59 million do not attend school. Of the rest, who are currently in school, four out of every 10 children beginning to attend school will drop out before completing their primary school education. In addition, various studies of the learning achievement of children indicate that the situation is actually grim. Recent community based surveys done in 28 cities and eight rural districts in the country find that not more than 30 per cent of school children in the age group 6 to 14, in an educationally advanced state like Maharashtra, can read simple text fluently or do basic arithmetic sums. So we see that still a lot needs to be done for the underprivileged children of India.

A brief look at the history of education of the underprivileged all over the world will reveal three clearly marked stages: Isolation, Assimilation and Integration.

(i) Isolation

Initially, a large number of underprivileged children were outside the network of education, having no access to educational facilities. With the realisation of social responsibility, various efforts were being made to provide them with education. But as in some countries like America, separate schools were created for the coloured population. Similarly, in India separate schools with a separate simplified curriculum were opened for the tribal population. Although government schools do not discriminate between class and caste in their policies, the attitudes and biases of teachers and administrators prevent them from accepting the lower caste children who are often made to sit separately, away from the rest of the children. Not only that, it was commonly believed that these children would not be able to handle the general curriculum and a special curriculum was prepared for them. The common belief that assignments for the underprivileged would result in failure made many educationists lower the bar for them. This created an isolation of another sort and the education gap continued to widen.

(ii) Assimilation

The second phase of the education of the underprivileged is marked by a tendency to assimilate. Attempts were made to educate the underprivileged learners along with the privileged learners in the same school. But casteism and class consciousness came in the way and it was case of isolation-assimilation as learners of lower castes sat in the same class but on separate benches or were relegated to the last benches where they seldom received the teacher's attention. Since the school and the system of education was based on the dominant or the advantaged group, the aim was to assimilate the underprivileged into the privileged culture. This attempt is still on and according to the Right to Education it is mandatory for elite private schools meant for the privileged sections of society to keep 25% of the seats for the underprivileged and also to look after their education monetarily.

(iii) Integration

In the third phase of integration, attempts were first made to educate the underprivileged in their own language and culture so that they would develop a positive attitude to their own culture and language. Depending on these approaches or stages, mainly three theories have been put forth to explain the poor achievement of the underprivileged learner: these varied from innate or hereditary qualities, to cultural deprivation in their environment or to the deficiency in the institution (school) itself.

Although these three stages have been historically noted, there have been instances where all the three co-existed at the same time in some countries.

3.3.2 Some Interventions

It has been noticed universally that the system of education was targeted at the privileged in the society and the curricular content, in both its selection and nature, mirrors the life of the privileged. The textbooks appeared alien to the underprivileged learners as they did not find any resemblance to their lives or their culture in the textbooks. In addition, the methods of teaching too were developed on certain assumptions of pre-knowledge which led to a gap in understanding for the underprivileged. Similarly, the teachers suffered from biases and an unfriendly attitude towards these learners which either led to the neglect of these learners or a simplification of the content and assignments, making them repetitive and boring.

As early as the 60's, 'The Kothari Commission (1964-66) articulated the idea of a "neighbourhood" school as a common space, where all children cutting across caste, class and gender lines learn together in the best inclusive manner. This idea has been articulated in practically all policy documents thereafter: the National Policy on Education 1968, as well as the National Curriculum Framework, 2005. This concept has also been incorporated in the RTE Act, 2009.' (Anshu Vaish, Secretary, School Education and Literacy, in her speech at Shri Ram School)

It has also been felt that the inclusion of underprivileged learners in schools, either government or private, has not been implemented fully, remaining a mere lip service in certain institutions. There is a clear demarcation between the schools for the privileged (privately-run schools) and those for the underprivileged (schools run by the government) and these cater to two distinct categories and economic strata. This segregation starts at an early stage in school; and many private schools feel reluctant to follow a policy of integrating children from the socio-economically weaker sections of society with those from the better-off strata.

The education policies of the government like the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Right to Education Act and the policy of neighbourhood schools are attempts to assimilate and integrate the underprivileged learners into the mainstream. In spite of these, certain assumptions need to be revisited and some interventions are required to realise these policies. By opening of the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, the Government of India has made quality education accessible to rural learners.

(i) Curriculum

The curriculum of the schools largely focuses on the skills and knowledge required for an individual to be integrated into the society of the middle class and white collared jobs. Skills and knowledge required for blue-collared jobs are neglected except for certain special schools and institutions. The textbooks are written from the point of view of the culture of the privileged. Contribution of the underprivileged class to nation building is neglected or ignored. Facts and information are densely packed in the textbook which seem suitable for highly motivated learners. Since the underprivileged learners find nothing of their lives, history or culture in the textbooks they find these irrelevant to their experiences and lose interest. A simplified curriculum for these learners is created based on the assumption that the underprivileged learners would not be able to handle any more of this. This further demoralizes them, and moreover they are not stimulated intellectually.

A conscious attempt needs to be made to make the curriculum not only attractive but also challenging for the underprivileged learners. Following are some of the suggested interventions:

- Inclusion of topics of interest or familiarity for the underprivileged learners
- Reflection of the lives and culture of the underprivileged as equal contributors to society
- Removal of biases in favour of the privileged
- Content should aim at fostering a positive attitude towards their lives and culture.
- Illustration could include tribal art and styles that represent their culture and lifestyles
- Stimulating but linguistically simple questions to help them develop their cognitive and analytical skills.

(ii) Teaching Methods

Studies in teaching methodology to the privileged and the underprivileged learners have revealed that teachers offer differential instruction to the privileged and the underprivileged.

In a study of African-American and Hispanic students in America, it was found that the 'novice readers' were taught differently from the advanced readers. The advanced readers received more instruction in critical thinking while instruction for the novice readers was restricted to rote, drill and memorization. The impact of this was felt later in high school when it was noticed that the underprivileged learners could not do problems with critical thinking as they were not introduced to it in their primary school. It was also assumed by the teachers that the advanced readers received more reinforcement from their parents whereas the study proved that both sets of parents reinforced the learning of their wards.

Studies have also shown that ‘the typical classroom environment tends to (and is intended to) mirror the interactive milieu of a typical middle class home (very different from a typical lower class home) hence the students find himself in an environment he does not fully understand but is expected to fit into’ (Marsha Cope et al).

Thus, in a way the education system is stifling the progress of these learners and not teaching them to overcome their circumstances and strive for excellence due to the assumption that the underprivileged will not be able to compete with their privileged peer.

If education has to be ‘empowering’ to the underprivileged learner then the following interventions can be made:

- The learners can be given a choice of choosing subjects for writing and books for reading.
- Discussions and activities in the classroom could also focus on topics that touch the lives of these students.
- They should be allowed to work on collaborative projects and allowed to make decisions about the choice of topic, method or group members.
- They should be encouraged to talk about and write about their own lives and experiences and these should be treated with respect in the classroom.

(iii) Evaluation procedures

A way of overcoming the problem of drop out was the government policy of non-detention at the primary level. It was understood that the teachers would ensure that 80% of the students would master 80% of the content and skill so that no one is detained. But this was misunderstood as a ‘pass all’ policy, as a result of which, learners who had not obtained even 10% of learning were merely promoted. On the one hand the teachers did not work with the learners to ensure learning and on the other hand the learners lost all motivation, comfortable in the thought that merely the basic required attendance would take them to the next class. This only helped in widening the gaps in knowledge and as the learners reached the higher classes they found it difficult to conceptualize or do abstraction, not having mastered the basic concepts. They also were deficient in the skills of taking the tests which were of only the paper pencil kind, which were summative in nature and were only an assessment of learning.

The focus has slowly shifted from paper pencil tests to continuous and comprehensive evaluation that takes into account the different learning styles and diverse capabilities of the learners and proposes stress-free activities and procedures for evaluating the learners on a continuous basis. It is hoped that the underprivileged learners will be encouraged to participate in different activities and display their strengths in some of them. Today the gamut of evaluation activities would encompass content, life skills (cognitive, social and emotional skills), learners’ own goal-setting and self assessment.

This will require a lot of teacher preparation not only in evaluation procedures but also in removal of biases from the testing procedures. Since the evaluation is holistic it would be essential to make the tests relevant to the context of the learners. Forty percent of the evaluation would be conducted by the teacher with whom the learners have been working closely, hoping thereby that the element of bias and unfair evaluation would be eliminated. This is because the interlocutor himself or

herself would be the evaluator and not an outside agency, who has no knowledge of the needs and problems of different learners.

Although it is important to inspire the underprivileged learner to compete with the others and strive towards excellence, a few provisions like clear instructions (perhaps in their own language), extra time during their initial stages of test taking, need to be made. Test taking skills of these learners would have to be sharpened and the criteria of evaluation explained well to them so that they can focus appropriately when they take a test.

If the teachers allowed the learners to improve at their own pace and provided a lot of scaffolding, in place of simplifying or merely lowering the bar for them, the underprivileged learners would be able to reduce the gap in achievement. One way of reducing stress and improving the performance of the underprivileged learners is to give collaborative tasks and projects wherein these learners get an opportunity to work with their peers and learn from them, at the same time feel comfortable under the common umbrella of the group.

(iv) Education through the language and dialect of underprivileged learners

Educationists agree that education in the early stages ought to be in the learner's home language before introducing them to any other language. The three language formula too recommends the use of home language or the regional language in the primary stage. It is believed that it is easier to develop the skills of reading and writing in the learner's home language. Learners can transfer some of the skills to the other language once they are fluent in their own language. In a country like India, where the cultural diversity is very wide, even the regional language may prove to be difficult to the underprivileged learner who is perhaps exposed to only the dialect of home and community.

To some extent this problem in learning a second language can be overcome by using a bilingual method in the initial stages and then slowly weaning them away from their own language and using the second language exclusively in the classroom.

(v) Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation is of utmost importance as it is the teacher who would execute the suggested methods or take the process forward. However good the material, its efficacy can be felt only in the hands of an efficient teacher. Most situations of teaching and learning require improvisation, on the spot modification and drawing associations across subjects. This is true of the teaching learning situations for the underprivileged. The teacher needs to be sensitive to the needs of the learners, be innovative to draw references or make modifications to make the topic or activity understandable and doable for the learners. The teacher's role in making the topic relevant to the learners in the classroom is immense as the curriculum framer and textbook writer only keeps some general guidelines in mind.

The teacher thus needs to be trained and sensitised to the following:

- Using a variety of methods to convey one idea
- Addressing the needs of the target group and overcoming biases
- Making the topic interesting and relevant
- Developing the skills of reading and writing amongst learners with 'experiential deficiency'

- Removing bias in the material, if any
- Treating all learners alike and encouraging the underprivileged to perform to the best of their capabilities

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What are the advantages of the government policy of inclusive education in which private or elite schools are enjoined to give at least 25% of their seats to underprivileged students?

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2. How can the curriculum be made meaningful for the underprivileged learners?

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3. List the different ways in which the underprivileged learners can be made to feel comfortable and motivated to learn in the classroom.

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**3.4 TEACHING ENGLISH TO THE
UNDERPRIVILEGED LEARNERS**

Before you read

1. Based on your reading of the previous sections predict some of the problems that underprivileged learners might face in the English classroom.
2. Suggest some methods to overcome some of the problems you thought of.

Learning English for the non-native speakers of ethnic minorities has always been a difficult task. This is because they have either no exposure to the language in their own community or are exposed to non-standard English, as is the case of the ethnic minorities like the African-Americans and the Spanish speaking Hispanics in the United States.

Some similar problems exist in our own country in relation to learning English, even though it is present everywhere in the environment in some form or the other. The underprivileged communities are disadvantaged in relation to the majority culture in our country. This is the culture of the middle class which has a larger and more sustained exposure to English through various sources like the environment

and the media. English enjoys a prominent place in this culture, either as a subject of study, a medium of instruction or a source of information.

Let us first consider why the underprivileged need to learn English.

3.4.1 The Need for English amongst the Underprivileged

As we mentioned earlier, English is very much a part of our lives and is found everywhere right from the school books to street and shop names, from public directions and notices to labels and instructions, from industries to the banks. English plays a major role in education and is a subject of study at the primary level in most of the states. In many schools it is the medium of instruction and higher education becomes better accessible with the knowledge of English. Technology today has made our lives simpler but in many instances is driven by English, like the computers and the Internet, where much of the information is in English.

English is also the language of power and a mastery of English can help a person gain entry into the elite circles of society; make higher knowledge accessible and enable one to be selected for prestigious jobs. In the context of globalisation, learning English has become essential and an inability to master it would lead to falling behind in society and the professional world. It is also required to stay abreast with whatever is happening in the world.

In a country with linguistic diversity, English acts as a **link language** which enables people from different parts of the country to communicate with each other.

3.4.2 Problems Faced by Underprivileged Learners in Learning English

(i) Fear of English as a subject of study

English by its very nature is very different from the Indian languages. The syntax in English is fixed, unlike that of many Indian languages, in using which a speaker enjoys the freedom of shifting the words and yet being able to convey the meaning. In addition, English does not have one letter-one sound correspondence and spelling and sounds do not always follow a uniform pattern. These two characteristics of the English language make learning complicated and difficult for the underprivileged learners. In addition, English is associated with the elite culture and this creates a sense of awe and fear amongst the underprivileged learners. In addition, textbooks in English contain texts which do not belong to the Indian milieu and are alien to the underprivileged learner who has to grapple not only with the language but with concepts as well. As we have said earlier the textbook has no representation of their lives and culture which further alienates them.

(ii) Language load and poor reading skills

Often the underprivileged learners speak a non-standard variety of language or a dialect. They already feel the load of learning to read the standard language which is often the regional language. In addition, they have to grapple with English which is very different from the languages they know. This pressure of languages on the underprivileged learners creates fear, gaps in learning and alienation due to which they lose all interest and motivation. In addition, because of their inadequate exposure to language and text in their childhood these learners have poor reading skills. As a result they are unable to use the knowledge resources which are part of

emergent literacy. In brief, they are unable to read a lot of material which is available in English and much of this material may be essential for day-to-day survival.

(iii) A feeling of alienation created by the learning materials

It has been earlier said that the textbooks and other learning materials are often written and chosen with an average learner in mind – who normally belongs to the middle class and who has the required experiences and background knowledge to handle the curriculum. Underprivileged learners feel inadequate and isolated when topics of which they have no knowledge are taken up for reading or writing tasks.

In addition, they are unsure of their language proficiency when they compare it with that of the other learners. They assume that the materials are very difficult to understand as they do not have the required language proficiency.

(iv) Low expectations from the teacher

Many a teacher has exclaimed, “This is a nice book but my learners cannot handle it at all.” Teachers have a general view that the underprivileged learners would find the material difficult and it would require a lot of effort and time on the teachers’ part to enable them to understand and learn. Teachers who have a low expectation from their learners do not expose them to stimulating material or sometimes simplify and provide the answers themselves in their attempt to ‘scaffold’. This leads to a flagging of interest and low motivation.

3.4.3 How to Help the Underprivileged Learners

While it is true that the underprivileged learners come to school with limited experiences and limited language skills, it is not appropriate to assume that they are not capable of improving or taking up a challenge. A teacher would need to develop an action plan and devote time to these learners without giving them the message ‘You may not be able to handle this’. They should rather encourage them to set goals for themselves towards improvement and provide as much support as possible. Some of the measures a teacher can take to accelerate language learning of underprivileged learners are given below.

(i) Mentoring the learners

Allow them to feel the spirit of challenge while being aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Encouragement and setting the goal high while providing both academic, social and emotional support through one to one mentoring, cooperative work and display of trust in their capabilities is a good strategy too. The teachers can have mini conferences with the learners and suggest ways to improve their language skills to bridge the gaps. They should be allowed to make their decisions on topics for study, for projects or writing tasks.

(ii) Introduction to critical thinking skills

It is essential that teachers introduce the underprivileged learners to critical thinking skills from an early stage. This will help them to become analytical and be able to make decisions. Earlier we had discussed how these learners are more mature than those from comfortable homes. Asking them open-ended questions or allowing them to choose the topics or books for projects and reading workshops would assure them that the teacher does not believe them to be cognitively deficient. If complemented with support whenever the learners require, it would lead to a positive self-image.

They can also be encouraged to explore their own backgrounds which will help them to set pragmatic goals.

(iii) Selection of relevant topics

Topics for classroom discussion and writing tasks would have to be sensitively selected to ensure that these fall within the experiences of the underprivileged learner/s that one is teaching. If care is taken not to select topics of which the learners have no knowledge, the learners will never feel a sense of inadequacy. When the learners will be able to identify with the topic, they would take interest and the task will be completed. If the focus is on their lives and their dreams, learners will move from a state of resignation to motivation and goal setting. Similarly, some of the topics used in the books need to be related to the lives of these learners, keeping in view the cultural diversity. If for the reading project the learners are allowed to exercise their choice on the kind of books they would like to read, the problem of involvement gap that was discussed in the earlier part of the Unit will be bridged. Younger children may choose to read very simple books which may be meant for children younger than them. They should be allowed to exercise this choice and slowly graduate to books meant for their level. It is very important to promote the culture of reading.

(iv) Adequate Scaffolding and support

The role of scaffolding - like giving tasks that these learners find relevant, explaining the tasks, breaking it up into doable smaller tasks, encouraging them to do the tasks and last but not the least providing the support of peers by way of collaborative work, cannot be undermined. In addition to the process writing approach, the teacher can also use the process approach to grammar as well. Instead of doing a grammar item formally and in isolation, learners can do speaking or writing tasks in which they practise the grammar item in a meaningful and contextual manner. Collaborative and cooperative learning modes will also provide for peer evaluation and peer editing of written work or project reports. This will lead to removal of errors in a more supportive environment.

(v) Use of bilingual methods

In the initial stages underprivileged learners can be exposed to bilingual methods wherein they can contribute their ideas in their own language or the teacher repeats her instructions in their language. This may be done in a natural manner without making the underprivileged learners feel that this is a special concession in view of their inadequate language skills.

At the primary level, questions should be formed in a way that the expected response can be only a word or a group of words. If the teacher continues to insist on answering in a complete sentence they feel de-motivated as they find the syntax of the English language very different from theirs. They should be encouraged to do language tasks that focus not on the language but on completion of the task.

To conclude, it can be said that if the learners are provided with a positive self-image and their expectations are kept high while giving a lot of support in a less obvious manner, they would be able to learn effectively.

Check Your Progress 3

1. In many countries, special focus is being laid on the education of the minorities with an emphasis on learning English. Do you think a similar focus is required in India too? Give reasons.

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2. State two important reasons for learning English for the underprivileged learners in India.

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3. Suggest ways to make English language learning meaningful for the disadvantaged learners.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt how the school situation is difficult for many of the disadvantaged learners. You have also viewed the problems that the underprivileged learners face while learning English which is so different in many ways from their own language. You have also seen how experiential deficits can come in the way of language learning.

A few ways of overcoming the situation from the view of the underprivileged learners have been suggested. As a teacher of English you could adopt or adapt these methods to help your learners to learn English.

3.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

Anand Geeta, *The Government's Rationale for Right to Education*, Wall Street Journal, June 4, 2011

Cope, Marsha. et al. *Teaching the Culturally Disadvantaged and Underprivileged Student*

Gumprez, J.J. 1982. Ed. *Language and Social Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Stubbs, M. 1976. *Language, Schools and Classrooms*. Second ed. 1983. London: Methuen

Quality education for the underprivileged, SMILE project

Williams, Brandy. *How the Education System Fails Underprivileged Students*, Twitter: www.twitter.com/@DaWriterChik

3.7 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. The term 'underprivileged' is used to refer to the disadvantaged section of people who are poor and socially backward or geographically isolated. They

lack proper health, education or skill. They may be poor, deprived culturally or living away from the main society. They know only their own language and may not be able to communicate properly.

2. Poverty, discrimination and exploitation, geographical remoteness and cultural disadvantage are the major causes of their being underprivileged. Because they are poor, they suffer from poor health and sometimes have no access to education. They also are deprived of the interaction and stimulating environment that middle class children get. Moreover, they are overworked and exploited which gives them little or no chance to socialize or their parents are also unable to give enough time to their children. They also suffer from a low self esteem.
3. The characteristics that stand in their way of learning are:
 - Low cognitive ability: due to mal-nutrition and inadequate learning experiences at home, their mental development is not adequate and hence they cannot understand ideas quickly.
 - Poor linguistic capability: due to poverty and illiteracy of the parents, children do not get an opportunity to hear and use much language. The language that their parents use may be a stigmatized dialect. Their parents are unable to provide them with enriching experiences.
 - Low self esteem: due to facing difficulties in school and comparing themselves with their better endowed peers, these learners develop a poor self image and feel that they would not be able to do what the others can do.
 - Their low self esteem deters them from participating actively in the class as they are afraid of failure. The topics in the books and the classroom activities do not have any resemblance to their lives. So they do not understand how the learning is relevant to them. As a result they become aloof and do not participate.
 - Not being exposed to much oral language and not having books or toys (unlike the middle-class children) these learners come to school poorly prepared to read and write.
4. The underprivileged learners may be weak in many areas but they have their strengths too. Having faced life and many responsibilities early in life, they have a strong sense of responsibility, are independent and emotionally mature.

Check Your Progress 2

1. The underprivileged learners would get an opportunity to study and work with better informed and skilled learners. The atmosphere in the elite school is very stimulating and this would help in the overall growth of these learners. They would get an opportunity to get a fair deal in life.
2. It should incorporate their lives and culture into it. A conscious attempt needs to be made to make the curriculum not only attractive but also challenging for the underprivileged learners. Topics of interest or familiarity for the underprivileged learners which reflect their lives and culture should be included in the curriculum. There should be no bias in favour of the privileged and the content should foster a positive attitude towards them. At the same time it should not be diluted too much under the impression that they may not be able to handle it. It should be challenging and mentally stimulating.

3. The curriculum should include aspects of their lives and culture. They should be made to feel responsible for their own improvement and too much dilution should not be made to the curriculum. Teaching methods should be such that they are encouraged to participate and work collaboratively, contributing their talents to the activity. Evaluation should be continuous and comprehensive and all aspects of the individual ought to be evaluated in low-stress situations.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Yes. Normally underprivileged learners are neglected in the classroom by the teacher and by the curriculum framers at the time of textbook development. The underprivileged learners should be given a fair chance to showcase their talents and progress in learning and develop their knowledge and skills. Things will happen only when government makes specific policies in their favour as the Government of India has done.
2. Two important reasons for learning English for the underprivileged learners in India:
 - (i) to be accepted in the elite circles and given equal respect and opportunity and
 - (ii) to get jobs in places where English has prime importance. They also need to have the basic reading and writing skills to undertake higher studies and share their ideas with the others.
3. Ways to make English language learning meaningful for the disadvantaged learners are the following:
 - Making the textual materials relevant to their lives and culture
 - Evaluation procedures should have variety and be non-stressful
 - Teachers need to be sensitised to the needs of the underprivileged learners and should treat them with respect
 - They should be encouraged to set goals for themselves to excel and improve
 - They should be given a lot of support in a sensitive manner
 - Teachers should mentor these learners which means they should have one to one conferences and offer solutions to their problems
 - Teachers should allow them to choose their own topics for certain classroom and home assignments.
 - Promoting the culture of reading
 - Bilingual multilingual methods can be used in the initial stages
 - Activities should be interesting, relevant and even challenging.

UNIT 4 LANGUAGE BASED LEARNING DISABILITIES (LBLD)

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The Learner with Language Problems
- 4.3 Speech and Language Difficulties
- 4.4 Reading Difficulties
- 4.5 Difficulties with Writing
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 Answers
- 4.8 Suggested Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- Identify major causes of language based learning problems;
- List the kinds of intervention required of the teacher;
- Adopt or adapt strategies to help the special learners; and
- Suggest follow-up action to meet the educational needs of the special learners.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Apart from the physically handicapped or partially hearing impaired - there is a small group of learning-disabled children in every class. Often they are euphemistically termed as 'slow learners'. The teacher is often frustrated by the lack of progress of this group despite frequent attention to their problems. It is also possible that a child has more than one learning difficulty; that the child is of average or above average intelligence but has a learning disability. In this Unit, we shall discuss language based learning disabilities among learners.

4.2 THE LEARNER WITH LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

It is important to note that each learning disabled child has an individuality and a unique complexity that is composed of the child's strengths and weaknesses. An assessment of these personal strengths and special needs can be made through observation and through discussion with the parents.

A profile of the educational needs of the child can be made on the basis of the following:

1. Description of the child's functioning
 - Description of the child's strengths and weaknesses
 - Factors in the child's environment
 - Relevant aspects of the child's history

- 2. Intervention aimed at
 - General areas of development
 - Specific areas of weakness or gaps in skills acquisition which impede the child's progress
 - Methods and approaches

Learners may have a wide variety of individual needs which are sometimes linked to psychological or physical factors (developmental), which call for skilled and discriminating attention of the teacher during assessment and while devising suitable programmes. The task of the primary school teacher in an inclusive classroom is a challenging one because she has to cater to the needs of different learners in the same classroom, allowing the learning-disabled learners to learn at their own pace amidst other learners. The tasks too need to be such that they foster self-learning, thus boosting the special learners' self-confidence and developing creativity and autonomy to a certain extent. Special learners are known to adjust to handicap better and to develop socially and emotionally in relationships with other children.

Basic principles of teaching the learning disabled child

The principles for educating learning disabled children are similar to those for all children:

- Meaningfulness
- Developing self-respect
- Teaching to the child's level

Some common deficits noticed amongst learners

The child may have problem in one or a few of the following:

- Language
- Perception
- Behaviour
- Reading
- Spelling
- Writing
- Numerature

We shall be discussing all except behaviour and numerature in this Unit.

Check Your Progress 1

1 Who is a learner with special needs? How would you identify such learners?

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2 Why a single measure cannot be used uniformly for learners with special needs?

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3) What does a teacher need to decide before planning remediation?

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4.3 SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

A great variety of language and speech difficulties occur among primary school children. Some of these children are just slow to develop while some may have physical or intellectual deficit.

Normally, a child's language is fully formed by the age of 4-5 years and she is able to use grammatically correct sentences. Her language differs from the adult's language only in style and texts. And by the age of 7 years a child would have obtained the following:

- no difficulties in articulating sounds
- ability to talk and express ideas in sentences
- ability to use all the tenses correctly
- ability to use negatives

If the teacher is aware of these milestones then speech and language problems can be identified and remediated at an early stage.

The Classification of Speech and Language Problem

There is a distinction between speech and language. Speech involves the production of sounds and language involves syntax or grammar and meaning (semantics).

The areas of speech and language that are mainly affected according to Garmen 1980 are: Levels of linguistic analysis of sounds (phonetics and phonology), grammar (morphology and syntax) and meaning (semantics). Crystal (1980) classifies speech and language problems on the basis of reception and production. A child may have difficulty in reception due to deafness, partial hearing or inability to discriminate between sounds. Difficulties in processing language in disorders like aphasia (unable to understand and express), agnosia, dyspraxia and dysarthria (speech problem), language production, lack of fluency, deficit in voice and articulation need to be addressed by a language pathologist.

For the teacher the common problems can be classified in a simpler manner.

1. Receptive difficulties:
 - a) Deaf and partial hearing (unable to catch certain sounds)
 - b) Auditory discrimination (difficulty in discriminating between sounds)
2. Language difficulties: Developmental language disorders (Unable to decode or encode language for communication)
3. Speech problems:
 - a) Voice
 - b) Fluency (stuttering and stammering)
 - c) Articulation (unable to articulate certain sounds, can be caused by physical factors)

Difficulties in Auditory Discrimination

It has been noticed that many of the children who have speech and articulation difficulties beyond the age of seven or eight years also have problems with the discrimination of speech sounds (auditory discrimination). This is reflected in poor reading ability. Auditory discrimination may occur amongst children who hear normally. Children till the age of 3 and 4 make mistakes in discriminating between speech sounds but soon grow out of it. Sometimes they can discriminate between the sounds when they hear them but are unable to produce them distinctly. So if a parent repeats their 'faulty word' back to them, say like the word 'back' for 'pack' their response is that of disbelief. This is because they are able to hear and discriminate but not able to produce certain sounds.

Children often find it difficult to discriminate between, c/k/g, b/p and t/d. Deficit in auditory discrimination can be caused by developmental (hearing) causes, persistent baby talk (learned immaturities) and problems occurring in the child's language. If this problem persists after the age of 7-8 years, the teacher/parent ought to plan remedial measures.

The teacher can undertake any of these to improve auditory discrimination:

- Same or different: This is an activity in which the child has to say whether the words in a pair are the same or different (park/part, pat/pad, crane/crane, bat/pat). In the sequence, the number of pairs having different words is more. So if a child chooses to say 'different' she will be more successful.
- Listening games: Child listens to a sequence of sounds and repeats, listens and notices the common sound.
- Phonic activity games: saying words beginning or ending with the same sound.
- Rhyming Games: producing rhyming words.
- Alliteration: saying fun sentences that use alliteration.
- Word families: saying words with similar letters that represent the same or different sounds.

Auditory discrimination is useful for reading when the reader has to convert the visual symbol into the auditory symbols in which oral language is encoded.

Developmental Language Disorder

Children who are backward in language development are either intellectually disabled or hearing impaired. There may be some who do not have these problems and are still backward in language development.

Children with language disorder display the following behaviours/symptoms:

- Difficulty in understanding the language.
- Difficulty in producing language for expression.
- Difficulty in auditory perception, discrimination and sequencing.
- Difficulty in rhythm both of speech and in physical activities like dancing.
- Poor in expression in spite of normal auditory perception.
- Persisting with baby talk.

By comparing the child's speech structures with normal speech structures one can surmise whether the child's language is simply delayed or there is a deficit. It is, however, not wise to come to a conclusion in haste.

We also need to study the child's system of communication and look for the following cues:

- whether the child engages in conversation spontaneously or not
- whether he or she answers questions or not
- whether he or she imitates well or not

Interventions

Language is inextricably linked with thinking. The first attempt is to train children to explain their thought using language. In order to stimulate thinking the following can be done:

- Discussions on various events and aspects and asking questions based on cause and effect
- Encouraging children to use language for complex purposes like reasoning or explaining (why something happened)
- Encouraging imaginative play and asking them to take on a role
- Providing adequate answers to the child's 'why' questions
- Using a wide vocabulary when talking to them

By providing activities that emphasise language use not only for communication but also thinking, the teacher can extend the child's experiences. By taking part in imaginative play along with the child and by answering the child's questions adequately, the teacher can provide a language model for the child to follow.

Speech Problems

You would have learned that the sound structure of a language is defined by phonetics and phonology. Phonetics refers to the sound quality of speech which includes pitch and loudness. Phonology refers to speech sounds themselves.

Speech problems can vary. A child with a Down's syndrome would have problems with the voice. Children in the ordinary classroom might have difficulties with articulation of certain sounds. And there may be those who stammer and stutter.

Speech problems can be of:

- voice (amongst children with low mental ability, hearing loss and speech delay as amongst children with Down's Syndrome, or children who speak too softly, too loudly or in a monotone).
- articulation (children who have a babyish way of speaking, 'wabbit' for 'rabbit', learned immaturities).
- stammering or stuttering (repeating a sound or a word like 'My bb..bbrother is f..f..four.'")

In more cases than one, the child will grow out of the problem but there may be cases where speech is abnormal. In that case they would have to be referred to a speech therapist.

Helping Children Who Have Difficulties with the Voice

The problems with the voice can be due to physical problems like asthma, chronic nasal congestion or laryngitis leading to breathlessness, a high nasal tone or

hoarseness.

Other problems can be speaking in a monotone, speaking too softly or too loudly. The teacher can help by using rewards whenever the child uses a desirable volume of voice or uses proper intonation.

Helping Children Overcome Stuttering and Stammering

Stuttering (also called stammering) often occurs in early childhood. The child may have developed speech normally and then began stuttering. A child may have been a fluent speaker before he or she began stuttering.

Stuttering is characterized by characteristic repetitions of sounds, stops and gaps. Below are a few examples:

- An abnormal amount of segment, syllable, word or phrase repetition - 'the pol-pol-policeman' 'the c-c-cater-p-pillar. Certain sounds like fricatives (f, v, s) and plosives (p, k, d) present the most difficulty.
- Obstruction of the airflow - referred to as blocking.
- Abnormal prolongation of sound segments, as in 'f-f-fish'.
- Introduction of extra words or sounds – 'um' or 'tut'.
- Erratic stress patterns in words, mainly due to very hesitant speech.
- Words left unfinished.
- Awkward circumlocutions in order to avoid saying certain words which produce difficulty.

Such kind of speech would be called non-fluent speech and many adults too suffer from it.

Another defect is called **cluttering** in which the child's speech becomes unintelligible because of slurred or omitted syllables or has improper phrasing and pauses when the child speaks at an excessive speed. Though the speech is fast, it lacks rhythm and is jerky. The child tends to omit sounds or displace sounds in his/her hurry. Such children try to slow their speed and become stutters.

Stuttering happens in four phases. It happens at pre-school when the child is under communicative pressure or is very excited and wishes to tell something. These children grow out of their stuttering. But when stuttering happens at the age of 6-7 years, a child stutters at the content words. A more advanced phase of stuttering is when the child fills up pauses with a sound, contorts her face or tries circumlocution in an attempt to avoid the word that is difficult to utter. As the stuttering advances the child becomes embarrassed and avoids communication.

Stuttering may be triggered after a traumatic incident and becomes pronounced by anxiety when the child is aware of her stuttering.

Remedial Measures

It is important to find the root cause of stuttering. If it is anxiety or the aftermath of a traumatic incident, then the child's self-esteem needs to be boosted. The help of parents can be sought in helping the child overcome stuttering. Relaxation techniques and encouraging behaviour can be used with children who are anxious and avoid speech.

It is important not to approach the stutter directly but deflect the child's attention from the stutter. Speech training can be provided using rhythmical activities, syllable-timed speech, providing a slow beat to which the child speaks and playing back the speech to the child after a while. Rewards and reinforcement whenever the child speaks without a stutter work.

To treat cluttering, the teacher can use syllable timed speech, rhythmical tapping, shadowing exercises and exercises based on reading which give practice in slow speaking.

Problems with Articulation

It is believed that by the age of 7-8 years most of the children would have acquired the ability to produce most sounds. There are, however, certain children who have difficulty in producing certain sounds. The exact problem can be ascertained through observation and by giving specific tests.

The most difficult sounds to reproduce are: 'z', 'th' as in 'the' and 'thing', 'v', 'j', 'c' as in ceiling, 's' as in sausage, 'r' and 'l'. Even pronouncing 'k' and 'g' in the final position is difficult for some children.

Some polysyllabic words can pose difficulty like Christmas and toothbrush, these present a difficulty not only because of consonant blends but also in the order. Children with speech problems often get the order wrong and call 'teapot' as 'peatot'.

Some cannot pronounce 'd' in initial position as in 'dinner' – 'tinner' or the medial 's' in sausage pronounced 'so-age' and 'h' in house pronounced 'ouse'.

It is seen that most of the children's speech problems are generally overcome with time. But for those that persist, the treatment should be carried out by a speech therapist. Speech therapy requires professional training. It is important to recognize the problem and organize suitable intervention.

Meanwhile, you as a teacher can do the following:

- correctly positioning the tongue
- demonstrating
- practising the problem sound for prolonged periods
- using stories and rhymes which contain the problem sounds
- using tongue twisters at a later stage

Check Your Progress 2

1) What are the common indicators that a seven year old child's language has developed normally?

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2) Which are the three categories of language based learning problems that a teacher may come across?

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3) What are the major difficulties in auditory discrimination?

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4) Mention a few symptoms that indicate language disorder.

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5) Briefly describe the remedial measures to help children overcome language based learning disability.

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4.4 READING DIFFICULTIES

One of the major problems facing educators is that some children of normal intelligence with regular attendance fail to read. When reading difficulty occurs amongst children of normal intelligence, it is called dyslexia. Reading difficulty can also occur amongst learners who have not had an opportunity to learn reading due to environmental reasons.

Reading difficulty can be classified broadly into the following categories:

- Illiteracy: of a person who has a reading age below 7 years
- Semi-literacy: when the reading age of child 7-9 years of age is 2 years below the chronological age
- Reading backwardness: when reading age is lower than chronological age
- Reading retardation: when reading age is significantly below mental age

Reading Backwardness

Reading backwardness may be caused by the following:

- **Neurological basis:** Slow cerebral dominance might lead to confusion between right and left, problem in finger localization and writing problems. Normally, while reading, the left hemisphere of the brain is functionally dominant, and it recognises letters. But in those with a problem, the right hemisphere recognizes the mirror image of the visual image of the letter received. This leads to a confusion in identifying letters like 'b' and 'd' or 'p' and 'q'. The child has poor left-right awareness even though she has begun to use her right hand predominantly. This child will have problems with language development and concept formation.
- **Other developmental problems** are poor auditory-visual integration. They are unable to associate the letter with the sound.
- **Environmental Causes:** These are the causes that are external factors that deter a child from reading in situations where a child has been taught to sound

out every letter, the child is confused when confronted with irregular spelling and slowly gives up on reading. Lack of reinforcement from the teacher whenever the child makes correct responses leads to reading neurosis and the anxiety of not being able to read, making reading even more difficult. Lack of assistance from the parents in the form of encouraging reading and providing resources in economically backward or large families can also result in reading backwardness. It has also been seen that in families where parents do not enjoy reading, children do not have an inclination towards reading.

Specific reading difficulties and their remediation

a Visual-motor difficulties

When children are not able to find the difference between reversed and non reversed words like burn: brun, burn: bunr, rubn: burn / dip: pid, bip, dib, dip. They have a problem in visual sequencing and though they begin to decode words, they go by sound clues alone and thus tend to make spelling mistakes like 'tork' for 'talk'. They might also read 'for' instead of 'from' or 'white' as 'which'. Similarly if they are asked to close their eyes and the teacher asks, "How many fingers am I touching?" These children cannot tell from touch alone. Such children are likely to develop reading difficulties.

Such learners also have problems in drawing figures in the correct orientation, drawing open or closed figures and drawing correct number of dots in a figure.

Some of these children fuse letters and may read 'close' as 'dose' or may omit or add letters to the words they are reading. They also tend to lose their place while reading and may miss lines or retrace lines.

Children with visual-motor difficulties can be helped through focused activities which involve;

- Analysing words into parts
- Using cut outs of words or using plastic letters
- Using colour as a cue
- Using movement to trace the shape and position of the letter
- Distinguishing the letter from the background
- Indicating to the child from where to begin reading to prevent reversals
- Using reminder cards with pictures and representative words for discrimination
- Discriminating between words and underlining a word from an array of words having similar letters
- Using markers to assist the child while reading

Most important of all, the teacher can capitalise on the strengths of the child and use the auditory-verbal channel while teaching.

- The child can be asked to think of new words that might sound like the word read.
- Short words can be used for grapheme-phoneme correspondence

b Auditory-Verbal and Language Difficulties

Delay in language development may lead to auditory discrimination and the child may not be able to retell a story. Although the child may maintain a correct sequence, the language structures and vocabulary would be poor. Such children may have difficulty in pronouncing letters like 'sh' or 'c' (sip for ship and tat for cat). They also may not be able to repeat more than four numbers forwards or backwards in a

sequence of numbers they hear.

Children with auditory-verbal and language difficulties may also have difficulties in blending sounds. They may be able to pronounce the letters individually but are unable to blend them in a word. A child might be able to read 'sh', 'i' and 'p' separately but is unable to pronounce them together in the word 'ship'. They have this problem especially when they are reading longer words.

Such children can be helped by reading out books, magazines or any other text in the environment, to them. They also need to learn that the language of the books is different from the language of speech.

Other measures that can be taken are:

- Matching sounds: The child says a sound that can be sustained like 'Tttt..' or 'Llll'. She raises her hand if the teacher repeats the same sound.
- Child is taught to concentrate on the positioning of the tongue, lips etc. while producing the sounds.
- Chaining of words by successively changing one sound to form a new word like - *cat-can-man-mat-met-wet*.
- Using rhyming games like 'I went to the market and bought a fan, can and pan. Children can go on supplying a word rhyming the word that the teacher says.
- Rhyming sentences like - *Lan likes a van and a pan/ Pat likes cats as pets*.
- Finding similarity or difference in the sounds (phonemes) occurring in the beginning, middle and at the end of words.
- Picking pictures that have rhyming words/names like - *tap, map, cap, lap*.
- Using plastic letters to make/find words that rhyme.
- Copying the rhythms and patterns by copying and tapping the pattern on the desk.
- Teaching word families using words that look the same so that when they encounter a new word with similar letters they may be able to decode it.
- Also teach them to blend sounds like 's'+ 'it', 'f' + 'it'.

While reading, the main skill the learner has to acquire is the automatic knowledge that certain letters or letter combinations represent certain sounds. While reading we break the word into its constituent parts, sound out these parts and blend them together. Such grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules are necessary for reading.

Graphophonic skills depend on an underlying ability to make auditory-visual associations. To develop these skills, plastic letters can be used and by manipulating a few letters of the words, the child can be helped to notice how the words change into new words. Thus combination of three or four senses – auditory, visual, tactile and kinesthetic is an important aspect of remedial teaching.

The picture of a book can be shown and the teacher says 'book'. Next the child can be asked to trace the word 'book' while the teacher says the word 'book'. Then the child looks at the picture of a book, traces the word and says the word 'book' aloud. This way all the senses can be exercised in remedial teaching.

c Problems with higher order reading skills

Auditory and phonetic skills as well as well developed vocabulary are all important for reading. At the outset the young reader largely used grapho-phonemic cues like

looking at spelling and recalling word families when guessing unknown words. As the reader grows more proficient she relies more on understanding to the context to puzzle out unknown words.

Children with reading difficulty make errors through ‘miscues’ along three dimensions.

- i **Grapho-phonetic miscue:** The child miscues the word by replacing it with a similar word say, reading ‘butter’ for ‘better’ or ‘look’ for ‘lock’.
- ii **Syntactic miscue:** When the child reads ‘Mother was speaking’ in place of ‘Mother was singing’ where the miscue has the same grammatical sense as the original word.
- iii **Semantic miscue:** Here the child replaces a word by its synonym or a word similar in meaning. In place of reading ‘We went to our homes’ the child would read ‘We went to our houses’.

Thus we can see that children with reading difficulties do not have much problem with context. They rather depend upon context to work out the meaning for new words and phrases.

Last but not the least, children need to understand that the language used at school or in books is different from the language of speaking.

Remedial measures

- Children must be read to and they need to read themselves.
- Let them go over various types of register (thematic vocabulary) which might help in developing the child’s reflective awareness.
- Use of nursery rhymes and alliteration at the initial stages and continue it into poetry at a later stage.
- Use of folk tales and fairy tales.
- Modern imaginative stories for listening and reading.
- Factual texts.
- Use of cloze exercises where the child makes a guess from the context and fills in the blanks which have been deleted after a uniform gap. There may be gaps where more than one alternative is possible and children can justify their choices, compare with the original and comment upon the difference.

Yet, in spite of a plethora of activities discussed and suggested to remediate reading difficulty, it is difficult to make definitive statements recommending specific methods for particular reading difficulties.

The best thing for the teacher is to make an intelligent guess about the child’s strengths and weaknesses based upon observation.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1. What is the difference between a dyslexic learner and backward learner?

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2. How would you identify reading backwardness?

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3. What are visual motor difficulties? How will you help the learners to overcome them?

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4. What are audio-verbal difficulties? What remedial measures will you take to address these difficulties?

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5. What are the difficulties associated with higher order reading skills? Suggest some measures to overcome them.

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4.5 DIFFICULTIES WITH WRITING

Writing is a complex activity and demands an integration of several different skills. Writing involves:

- i selection of ideas
- ii expressing the ideas in words and sentences
- iii mechanics of writing (like handwriting, spelling, format etc.)
- iv motor skills of forming letters in writing or typing (if on a computer)

According to Johnson and Myklebust (1967) difficulties in writing may occur at different stages and in different areas. These could be in:

- planning and selection of ideas
- expression in language
- spelling
- handwriting (fine motor skills)

Difficulty in planning and selection of ideas

In the initial stages learners are expected to copy words and phrases into the blanks from a box in a highly controlled manner. Planning and coordination is not required much in classes 1 and 2. Difficulties will become evident when the learner

is expected to do some guided or free writing which involves coordination of planning, sentence structure and spelling. Writing tasks like writing stories, letters, describing personal things or writing about personal experience may have evidence of writing difficulties.

The difficulty in planning and selection of ideas can be due to basic language difficulty with inadequate vocabulary, expression and general knowledge. The cause of the difficulty may be traced back to the child's early years when the child was not exposed to reading, books, stories or oral communication due to the home environment.

Another kind of writing difficulty can be seen amongst children who can read well and have a good oral language but are unable to express themselves in writing. They may be very active in the class responding to questions orally or reading well but writing poorly.

A child can be placed in different levels of writing ability and then by means of focused activities helped to reach the next stage and progress to the required level.

Concrete-description Level

The child at the concrete-description level can convert thought into oral language but has limited written expression. The teacher can help the child by using the following methods:

Initially making the child write very simple sentences which are copied.

Showing the child an object and asking the child to think of as many ways as she can to describe the object: long yellow pencil, nice yellow pencil, new colour pencil, etc.

Next is asking a child to describe an object along different dimensions like its shape, colour, size and use.

Concrete-imaginative Level

This level requires the child to use imagination. The activities at this level are initially done verbally. Later the child is encouraged to write the phrases. The child can be encouraged to write simple sentences by looking at pictures and asking the child questions about the sequence like *what is happening*, *what will happen next* and *what the person will feel at that time*, etc.

By doing this the child is able to manipulate ideas into past and future events, or imagine what a person in a picture is doing or infer where a person may be or what the person is planning to do next.

Abstract-descriptive Level

This is the next level in writing wherein the child can write longer pieces of text using a visual or verbal stimulus like pictures to be sequenced in a kind of story before writing the story. Initially the number of pictures is restricted to 3-4 and later increased and more events introduced.

Gradually the child begins to present different characters in the story and may give them characteristics based on perception and experience. Children can also be encouraged to write short plays.

Abstract-imaginative Level

This is a sophisticated level and only a few students of the primary school can attain it. However, children can be made to work collaboratively and develop a

story with the following guidelines. They can use the original plot, create characters, create a situation and narrate in a fairly interesting manner.

The story should have:

- an imaginative setting
- a sequenced plot
- a message that can be concluded from it

The writing activity can be preceded with a preparation wherein the teacher holds a discussion and gives them direction. The teacher can also provide the students a set of questions to address so that they can produce a more mature text.

Difficulties with Grammatical Structure

The second requirement for a piece of writing is that it should be presented in adequately formed sentences and paragraphs. The other difficulty children face is with developing sentences with correct grammatical structure.

The teacher can help such children by using the methods given below:

- First encourage them to create clear and interesting sentences orally through discussion and then transfer them onto writing.
- Use topics that interest the child so that s/he is encouraged to talk about it before putting it down on paper
- Practice in meaningful discourse.

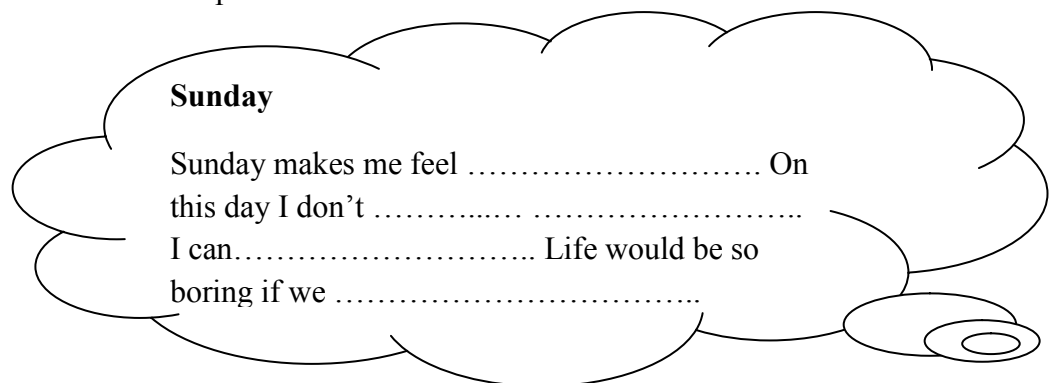
Here is an example.

The dog looked into the water. He saw with a bone in his mouth. He did not know that he was at himself in He at the dog water. That dog growled too. This made the dog even angrier and he to bark. The bone into the water.

After the child has completed the passage the teacher discusses the portions that s/he has put in and makes suggestions.

Another exercise that can be used is giving a composition, in which the ends of sentences are deleted.

Here is an example.



A picture story in which the words have been erased from the dialogue bubbles. The child fills in what the person might be saying in that situation.

Selecting the most suitable caption from those given for a picture is another activity that can foster imaginative thinking. The child reads the phrases aloud many times before deciding on the caption to select.

Difficulties with Handwriting

Initial attempts at writing are conscious and often a child speaks aloud each word as she writes. As she matures, she develops fluency and automaticity. The act of writing now requires less conscious effort. This skill of fluent writing is a kind of kinetic melody which requires an integration of the hand, motor parts of the brain controlling movement, the eye, the language areas and the association areas in the brain and the frontal cortex which is responsible for attention, short term memory tasks, planning and motivation.

Difficulty in handwriting may happen due to a defect in visual-motor integration which means that a child is unable to translate visual information into a motor activity. Other causes may or may not be due to language problems.

Writing disorders can be of various degrees. The types of writing errors can be classified as:

- Reversals: 'gosp' for 'gods'
- Orientation errors, e.g. 'bogs' for 'dogs' (Also happens with letters p/q, m/n, a/o, r/v, h/k and d/b)
- Other forms of errors, e.g. 'kiten' for 'kitten', 'teleision' for 'television'
- Preservations: e.g. 'bananana' for 'banana'

Remedial measures

A few things can be observed to ascertain if a child has difficulty with handwriting. If the child watches her hand while writing, or verbalizes while writing she has a problem with handwriting. It is also important to observe how many types of movements the child can make while writing.

- Involved in pre-writing activities like drawing of a circle. Initially the child follows the pattern with his/her finger and also makes large patterns in the air
- Getting kinesthetic and tactile feedback
- Integrating visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile senses
- Getting auditory feedback as well as visual feedback
- Tracing, copying and writing on the blackboard

Another important principle to observe is to move from large to small patterns, transferring from gross to fine movements. The direction of movement should be in accordance with the flow used in writing. The child should be encouraged to make the movement in one piece.

Simple printed letters can be taught by the use of felt or 3D letters, blackboard, dot-to-dot tracing, etc.

Writing patterns can also encourage the development of the flow of writing and automaticity.

It is also important that whatever styles of handwriting the child is taught, cursive or manuscript, it should be taught consistently. Currently there is no certain view that one is better than the other.

Difficulties in Spelling

Normally when we spell we use three processes. First we analyse the speech sounds. Then we convert the phonemes into graphemes. After we have written a word down we look at or read it to check if it is correct. There are occasions when children know the spelling and can look at a word and say whether the word is spelled correctly or not, but are unable to write the word correctly themselves.

Initially spelling is a phonological skill when we convert the sounds into letters or phonemes into graphemes. Reading is a visual skill. These two skills get fused as the child matures and begins to use both simultaneously.

As mentioned earlier the spelling process has four steps:

- a analysis of speech sounds (saying or sounding the words in our head or in other words, oral spelling)
- b conversion of phonemes into graphemes (selecting the letters and letter combinations to translate the sounds into the written form)
- c writing the graphemes (formulating the shapes of the letters, joining them and maintaining proper space between letters and words)
- d visual check (reading what we have written to check whether we have made any mistake in spelling, which might happen if a person is writing in a hurry)

A mature speller does not need to sound out the words but uses the vocabulary of whole words with which he or she is familiar. The word is written as a whole and one glance can tell whether it has been spelt correctly.

Some problems regarding spelling

There are two types of spelling difficulties common among children.

- Those who have a combined **reading and spelling difficulty** (called dysphonetic dyslexic). They make errors where the words are similar to the original word only visually and bear no phonetic resemblance ('loose' for 'house' or 'class' for 'star'). This child is **trying to use the lexical route**.
- Those who have only spelling difficulty. (has a visual problem and attempts to write words phonetically) Dyseidetic dyslexia – 'stah' for 'star', 'hows' for 'house' or 'muthr' for 'mother'. Such children use the **phoneme/grapheme spelling route**.

Children with spelling difficulty also have difficulty in visualizing the word – here the child may write words that may be phonetically correct but not correct in spelling ('yacht' as 'yot')

Children with language difficulty tend to make both phonological and visual errors. A child's spelling errors arise from the inability to use the two routes available (grapheme/phoneme or lexical route).

Remedial measures

Using the visual route

Two kinds of remedial measures can be taken for the difficulties described above.

- Improving the child's visual and kinesthetic memory for the whole word
- Improving phoneme/grapheme conversion

These can be done through exercises like:

English has many irregular spelling which causes difficulty for the young writer. Irregular spelling also makes the teaching of phonics very difficult since often there is no uniform phoneme-grapheme correspondence.

The best way is to expose the child to a lot of English through story books and by attracting attention to the English that is around us in the environment.

Check Your Progress 4

1. At what stage do children face problems of writing? What kind of problems do they face?

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2. What mental processes does writing involve?

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3. What are the four levels at which a child plans and expresses ideas? How can a child be helped to move from one level to another?

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4. How can a teacher help a child overcome difficulty in writing?

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5. Mention ways in which a teacher can help children overcome difficulty with grammatical structure?

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4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have addressed the needs of learners with various language based disabilities. We have discussed in detail the learning difficulties associated with the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. We have given you information that will help you to identify and understand the differential needs of such learners. We have also discussed and presented various strategies and activities that can help a teacher with appropriate interventions. This will help the learners consolidate the learning points in order to optimize learning in an inclusive classroom.

4.7 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. A learner who may have any of the following problems is a special learner:
- inadequately developed language and expression
 - problems of perception leading to faulty interpretation of words or images
 - poor communicative behaviour
 - difficulties in reading
 - difficulty in spelling words
 - difficulty in writing
 - problem in concept of numbers and in working with numbers

Such learners can be identified through observation and giving appropriate tests.

2. Every learner has a unique problem. Some may have a problem due to inadequate development. Some may have a problem due to poor stimulus in the environment. Learners may have a physical or mental problem or both. Every learner has his/her own strengths and weaknesses.
3. Before planning remediation, a teacher needs to develop a profile of the learner noting strengths and weaknesses, factors in the child's/learner's environment, relevant aspects in a child's/learner's history and then decide on the interventions.

Check Your Progress 2

1. The common indicators that a seven year old child's language has developed normally are:

- can make grammatically correct sentences.
 - can articulate all the sounds of the language (home language).
 - is able to talk, expressing ideas in sentences.
 - is able to use negatives while speaking.
2. The three categories of problems that a teacher may come across are:
- receptive difficulties: unable to catch sounds (due to hearing defect) or discriminate between sounds.
 - language difficulties: difficulty in decoding and encoding for expressing ideas in language.
 - speech problems: voice, articulation and fluency.
3. The major difficulties in auditory discrimination are:
- they read poorly.
 - cannot discriminate between sounds.
 - can receive sounds but cannot reproduce them clearly.
 - major difficulties are in discriminating between ck/g, p/b and t/d.
 - Child may persist with baby talk.
4. A few symptoms that indicate language disorder are:
- difficulty in understanding the language.
 - difficulty in producing language for expression.
 - difficulty in auditory perception, discrimination and sequencing.
 - difficulty in rhythm both of speech and in physical activities like dancing.
 - poor in expression in spite of normal auditory perception.
 - persisting with baby talk.
5. The remedial measures to help children overcome language based learning disability are:
- activities to sharpen sound discrimination.
 - listening and repeating sounds.
 - phonic games like making words with word beginnings or word endings.
 - rhyming games.
 - games on word families.
 - having discussions on stories and daily events.
 - encouraging children to use language to express, reason or explain
 - encouraging imaginative play activities.
 - answering the child's queries about things.
 - teaching students with stuttering and stammering to speak slowly and providing them with practise in producing the difficult sounds in a context.
 - using a lot of stories and rhymes in the classroom.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Dyslexic learner is of normal intelligence with adequate stimulus, but is unable to read. A backward learner is one who has no stimulus to reading because of non-enriched home environment which is common in poor households.
2. Through observation, tests and activities and noticing if the child:
 - confuses between similar looking words and reading a mirror image.
 - whether the child has left-right awareness of hand.
 - unable to associate letter with sound.
 - gets confused when confronted with words with irregular spelling.
 - is reluctant to read.
3. Children with visual motor difficulties:
 - have problems in visual sequencing and cannot distinguish between reversed and non-reversed words.
 - while reading they use sound clues.
 - cannot tell with closed eyes how many fingers the teacher is touching.
 - cannot draw figures in correct orientation.
 - may fuse letters while reading (close as dose).
 - often lose their place while reading.

The teacher can organise activities in which the child:

- analyses words into sub parts.
- makes words using cut outs of words or plastic letters.
- identifies words using colour as a cue.
- uses finger to trace the shape and position of letters.
- distinguishes background from the letters.

The teacher can also:

- indicate to the child from where to begin reading to prevent rehearsals.
- use reminder cards with pictures and representative words.
- underline a word from a list or cluster of words having similar letters:
little, puddle, apple.
- use markers to assist the child while reading.
- work on the strengths of the child and use the auditory-verbal channel while teaching.
- ask the children to think of new words that might sound like the word read.
- use short words to show letter-sound correspondence.

4. Audio-verbal difficulties:

- inability to retell a story using language though the sequence of events is maintained
- inability to blend sounds to create new sounds
- inability to repeat more than four numbers in a forward or backward series

Measures that a teacher can undertake are:

- teaching the child to match sounds
- teaching the position of the tongue while producing the sounds
- using word chains in which one letter of the word is changed each time
- using rhyming games and encouraging children to supply a word rhyming the word that the teacher says
- sound discrimination activities
- rhyming activities using pictures or plastic letters
- teaching children to tap the pattern of words and rhythm on the desk
- teaching word families - words which have similar spelling to help them decode them
- training them in producing sounds with sound blends

5. Difficulties associated with higher order reading skills:

Child is still dependent on spelling and word families to decode words and cannot decode them from the context. While reading the child could miscue the word with a similar looking word. While reading, replace the word with a word which is grammatically similar but not the original word. The child also uses a synonym of the original word while reading.

Some of the remedial measures that a teacher needs to undertake are:

- reading out to the children and encouraging them to read
- familiarising them with thematic vocabulary
- using a lot of nursery rhymes with alliteration
- use of folk tales and fairy stories
- using imaginative stories for listening and reading
- reading informative texts
- using cloze exercises

Check Your Progress 4

1. Children face problems of writing at the age of 8-9 years when they begin to write composition. They face problems of:
 - cognition – thinking of and selecting ideas
 - language – using language to express the ideas

- spelling and grammar (sentence structure)
 - punctuation
2. The mental processes involved in writing are:
- selection of ideas
 - planning and sequencing of ideas
 - expressing ideas in words and sentences
 - using mechanics of writing
 - motor skills of handwriting
3. The four levels of planning are:
- i. **concrete-descriptive**: child can verbalize ideas orally but is unable to write them down. Can be helped with suggestions regarding words and sentences and encouraged to write words and phrases
 - ii. **concrete-imaginative**: child can write phrases and sentences looking at pictures and say what is happening and predict what will happen next. Can be encouraged to think of a story or sequence using pictures and create characters
 - iii. **abstract-descriptive**: can look at pictures in a sequence and based on them develop a story and create characters on their own, but still needs a stimulus of some kind – verbal or visual. Can be encouraged to think of original ideas based on experiences and write the narration
 - iv. **abstract-imaginative**: able to think, plan and write narration on an original basis, creates characters and situation
4. A teacher can help a child to overcome difficulty in writing through the following:
- oral discussions on a topic or situation
 - use of stimuli – verbal or/and visual
 - sequence of pictures
 - motivation
 - suggestions
5. The measures to help with problems of grammar include:
- discussions to encourage oral expression and use of appropriate grammatical structures
 - use of topics that interest the students
 - encouraging children to talk about the topics before sitting down to write
 - provide grammatical input
 - provide completion exercise to practise syntax and grammatical structures
 - picture stories with missing dialogues of characters in bubbles

6. The measures to improve handwriting are:
 - pre-writing activities
 - allowing child to feel and trace plastic letters
 - observing their own hand movement
 - tracing, copying and writing on the black board
7. The spelling process involves:
 - analysis of speech sounds
 - sounding out the words in our heads
 - converting phoneme into grapheme
 - writing the grapheme (letter/letters)
 - visual check to ensure the spelling is correct
8. The two ways are:

Using the visual route:

Using visual and kinaesthetic memory; improving phoneme-grapheme conversion, exercises wherein the child selects same word; corrects a word; completes a word; using common words in an irregular spelling.

Phoneme-grapheme conversion route:

Asking the child to sound out words as she writes; teach regular and irregular words separately; using common rule for irregular words; teaching spelling in a non-phonetic way; fun activities like physical actions along with spelling or at syllables.

4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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