
UNIT 4 LANGUAGE BASED LEARNING DISABILITIES (LBLD)

Structure

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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.

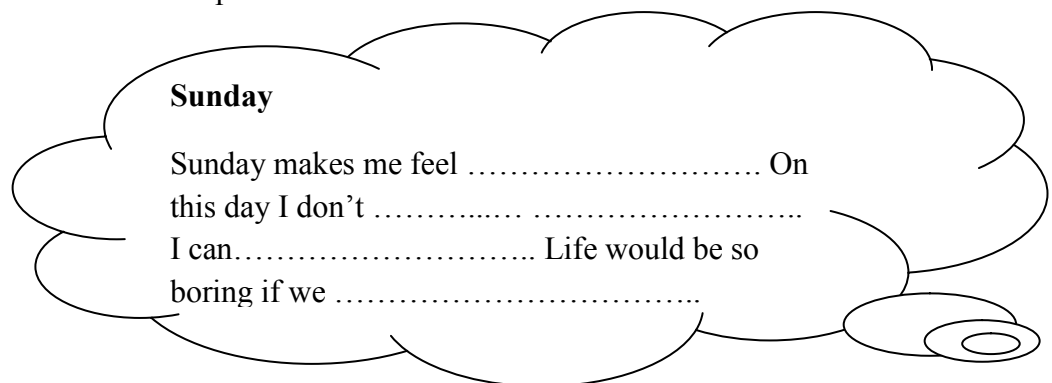
Here is an example.

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', 'telesion' 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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