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Development of Early Literacy & Language in Pre School Children

Introduction

The development of child's language begins from birth. The critical period for language development lies between 6 months after birth to 4 ½ years of age. Language is the medium for children to connect with people as well as construct and organize their knowledge about the world. The development of children's oral language seems to occur quite spontaneously and effortlessly as the child is immersed in language from the earliest days and hears others around him/her use language for authentic real life purposes. The development of the ability to read and write needs more guided attention from adults but is also spontaneously facilitated if the children are immersed in a print rich environment from their earliest years and see others around them using reading and writing to carry out their daily activities. In such a facilitating environment, children simultaneously develop as speakers, listeners, readers, writers and meaning makers from birth. The development of reading and writing may be challenging for those who come from print deprived environments and further experience mechanical and drill like pedagogies in the preschool and early primary classrooms where the focus is on getting children to memorize the alphabetic principle, comprising meaning making as the central motivation for the children to learn to read and write.

- At what age do children learn to speak?
- At what age should we read aloud to children?
- What is the relationship between oral language and print?

Children know much about spoken language and use it with a great deal of facility when they enter school. They are actively creating concepts about reading and writing embedded in their respective families and neighbourhood and their linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. When the teacher is able to conceptualize the learning at school as a continuation of learning before school for each child, she is able to plan for meaningful literacy experiences in school enabling children to grow as readers and writers from the earliest days in school.

In order to support and organize for children's literacy development in the classroom it is important to understand the theoretical background. This paper guides the child-teacher through a systematic study of young children's language and literacy development, with a focus on the latter. It also equips them with pedagogic tools to translate the theoretical understanding into practice in linguistically and culturally diverse preschool and early primary classrooms. It has the following sections:

i. Development of Oral Language in the Early Years
ii. Understanding the Reading Process
iii. Emergent Literacy Framework: A Developmental View of Reading and Writing
iv. Diversity in the Classroom: Pedagogical Implications
v. Children's Literature: Selection and Use
vi. Creating a Language Learning Environment: Principles and Practices
vii. Learning to Read and Write: Multiple Approaches and Practices
viii. Assessment and Evaluation
ix. Introducing English in Early Years

Unit 1 :Development of Oral Language in the Early Years:

Most children learn spoken language within a social context, during meaningful interactions, without formal education. This use of oral language by young children also exhibits a mastery of rules of oral language, an indication that they have an innate capacity to acquire oral language used in the environment.

Children do not learn oral language only by imitating individuals they interact with. This is because, there is evidence that children are able to construct forms that adults would never use, for examples, "I eated rice" or "He gived me water." In cases such as these, it is possible that children hear adults using the past tense and overgeneralize to forms that are exception to the rule in the English language.One can find similar examples across languages.

Even before children are able to say the first word, they communicate by gestures, crying, cooing and making various sounds.As children communicate, they interact socially with the individuals around them.Social interaction enables children to make sense of their experiences.

Thus, while language development occurs as a result of a complex interplay involving innate mechanism, social interaction and the child's own thinking, the development proceeds through some variable stages. Most children utter their first words around one year to one and a half years of age with a rapid burst in language development around the ages of two to three years.They are able to use complex patterns by the age four years or so.The time of utterance of the first word could be anywhere from ten months to twenty months. One child may use complex sentences at five and a half years, another could do the same at three and a half years of age. Thus, by the time children go to school, they are easily able to converse in their home language with individuals around them and also use oral language for a variety of purposes. However, the variability in language development must be understood.

Supporting language development: While oral language development seems to develop naturally amongst most children—support needs to be provided by caregivers and teachers. One of the key strategies to support language development is to allow children to talk without constantly interrupting them or correcting them. When children first start speaking, they may be unable to pronounce several sounds like adults such as, 'f' 'j' and so on. Teachers and caregivers can enable children to sustain natural language development by providing supportive environments by talking and interacting with them. However, even with the adequate support in oral language development, if a child's oral interaction is starkly different from other children or the child is not responding when others interact with him/her, it is critical to seek professional assistance from a speech and hearing specialist.

Many types of oral language experiences contribute to children's language and literacy development. Chief among these experiences are conversations. In analyzing what makes a conversation beneficial to literacy development, some researchers make the distinction between contextualized and decontextualized conversations (Dickinson and Tabors, 1991; Snow, 1983, 1991). Contextualized conversation is tied to the immediate environment. We use this type of

language when we say things like "Get your coat" or "Eat your snack." This kind of language is simple, and it omits important features of language that are integral to reading.

Contextualized language is also the language most frequently used by teachers and caregivers. In one study of Head Start, McCabe and Roberts found that 60% of classroom conversations were discussions about ongoing activities while another 11% of conversations were focused on controlling children. Only 7% of conversations were considered beneficial to literacy development. Similarly, in reviewing data from the Home-School Study, Dickinson found that only 20 percent or less of the time children talked with adults in preschool was spent in conversations that went beyond the here and now. The rest of the time teachers were giving directions or asking children for specific information, such as the names of colors or letters.

When we write, read, and have conversations beneficial to literacy development, we want to use decontextualized language. This is language that is not tied to the immediate context. It may reflect past events, future events, or fictitious events. For example, decontextualized language is used in everyday dinnertime conversation, when adults tell stories of their childhood, or when children tell about their school day. This type of language requires children to use their developing mental abilities to represent ideas, and this process is important to the development of reading comprehension (Dickinson and Tabors, 1991; Snow, 1983, 1991).

The 13-year Harvard-sponsored longitudinal Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development (Snow, Dickinson & Tabors) has documented a strong connection between early reading success and the amount of decontextualized talk children engage in with adults, in both homes and schools. Simply put, this means conversation that goes beyond the here and now and which relies on language to convey information about other times and places. Decontextualized conversations also occur when an adult reads a book with a child: the two stop to discuss what the book means instead of merely reciting the text word for word.

In addition to using decontextualized language, beneficial conversations have the following attributes:

– A balance of teacher and child input (turn taking)
– Attentive listening
– Extended discourse that stays on a topic of interest to a child
– Vocabulary that is introduced in a focused way.

Some strategies that caregivers and teachers can use to support language development among young children are:

– Engage young children in communication, even if they are at a non-verbal stage. Children are able to understand how language works and the social norms associated with oral language from a very early age.
– Understand that language is a marker of a child's identity and value system and whatever language the child speaks, it must be respected as the child's system of communication.
– Encourage interaction among children and adults. Learning language from peers and adults is an important part of language development, especially in mixed-age groups. Activities

involving a wide range of materials should promote talk. There should be a balance between individual activities and those that nurture collaboration and discussion, such as dramatic play, block-building, book-sharing, or carpentry.

- Remember that parents, caregivers, teachers, and guardians are the chief resources in language development. Children learn much from each other, but adults are the main conversationalists, questioners, listeners, responders, and sustainers of language development and growth in the child-care center or classroom.
- Continue to encourage interaction as children come to understand written language. Children in the primary grades can keep developing oral abilities and skills by consulting with each other, raising questions, and providing information in varied situations. Every area of the curriculum is enhanced through language, so that classrooms full of active learners are hardly ever silent.
- Help all children join in the conversation. Assume that all children have something to say. Make it easier for a child to express her ideas by saying, Julia wants to add something she knows about trees.
- Show respect for children's ideas. Try to figure out what a child means and invite him to say more. Tell us some more about your plans. Help children learn to encourage one another to extend their ideas. Tulsi had an interesting idea for what to do with this big box. Can anyone think of a question to ask him about his idea?
- Help children stay on the topic. When a child says something that is unrelated to the topic, acknowledge the comment while gently steering her back to the topic at hand. Reena, that's nice that you had idly for breakfast. Do you have any ideas about what might have lived in this shell?
- Encourage children to express their ideas clearly. Sometimes young children begin a story in the middle or leave out some important details. Help a child complete a story by saying, Rahul, start at the beginning. We don't know where you went, so you have to tell us.
- Make conversations interesting. Introduce topics related to children's activities and interests, build on children's past experiences, invite children to make comparisons, and ask questions that can be answered in several different ways. Pause to give children time to think before responding. Encourage children to add to the discussion by saying, Tell me more about that.

Practical: Observe and record verbatim the conversation between two childrenaround four years of age for 3 minutes. Analyze this piece ofconversation and state what were the purposes for which childrenused language.

Unit 2 Understanding the Reading Process

One of the main goals of reading is comprehension. Given this, learning to read a text is a complex process involving strategies for decoding as well comprehension. It is important to note that learning to read involves many complicated processes.

Oral language provides the foundation for learning to read, and is related to overall reading development during the schooling years. When children are exposed to rich oral language, they are listening to complex conversations, they are also able to develop rich vocabulary and understand the complex structures of language.A strong oral language and vocabulary helps to understand texts better. This enables children to understand the complex sentences present in many texts; and they require the ability to reason and infer so that the necessary links between information in texts can be made.

When young children are surrounded with print in various forms and see individuals reading and writing around them, it provides good modeling behaviours. Learning how to read is not natural like oral language development. Reading needs to be taught. If children are provided with a print rich environment, it enables them to become familiar with the conventions of print.

Children are not born with the knowledge that marks on a page (which we call letters, words) can be read out and they form meaningful constructions or that we read English, Hindi or Telugu from left to right, and from the top of the page down, or even the way to open a book. This awareness develops gradually from a very young age if young children observe people around them reading for pleasure and for a variety of other purposes, opening and closing books, turning pages, and responding to what they read. If adults read out stories to young children and while reading point to individual words, children understand the relationship between print and oral language. If adults model punctuation, letters, children also learn to recognise what print looks like, how letters differ from punctuation, and to identify some letters and frequently occurring letter patterns and words.

Given the disparities in the background of the children, we know that all children do not have the benefit of a language-rich and print-rich

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Concepts About Print(By Marie Clay)

1. Orientation or layout of text/ Front of book: Hand the child the book, holding it vertically so that the spine faces the child. Ask:
• "Where is the front of the book?" • "Where is the back of the book?" • "Open the book to where the story begins." Child can open the book to title page or first page of story.

2. Print, not pictures, carries the message: With the book open to page 1, ask the child: • "Show me the picture." Describe and discuss details of the picture. • "Show me the words."

3. Direction of print: On the same page ask: • "Show me where to start reading." If child's response is vague, prompt, Where exactly?" Show me with your finger." • Point to the first word, read it and ask: "Where do I read after this?"

4. Page sequencing: Point to the last word on the left page and ask: • "Where do I read after this?

5. Difference between letter and word: Give the child the two strips of paper. Demonstrate how they slide together and apart on a page in the book. On the same page ask: • "Show me one letter." • "Show me one word." • "Show me the first letter in a word." • "Show me the last letter in a word."

6. Return Sweep: Turn to a page with at least 2 lines of text. Read the top line and keeping your finger on the last word ask: • "Where do I read after this?"

7. One-to-One Correspondence: Point to the first word on a new page and before reading, ask the child: • "Point to each word as I read this line." Does the child follow and match text as you read? 8. Punctuation: Point to the period, tracing it with your pencil and ask: • "Do you know what this is?" If so, ask: "What is this for?"

environment in their homes and communities. These children enter preschool without familiarity of print forms of literacy. They will be further disadvantaged if they are not provided with adequate modeling of how print functions at school. All young children need a stimulating language environment at school, but for children from less literacy-rich backgrounds, the need is critical. However, at the same time, we must remember that young children come with rich oral language at the preschool and we must find ways to enable young children to see the connections between their oral language and print. This can be done while reading to children.

The five stages of the reading process are:
1. Pre-reading
2. Reading
3. Responding
4. Exploring
5. Applying

Stage 1: Pre-reading: This is the stage before reading. The teacher should prepare children to read. S/he can select a piece of children's literature and tell the children what they are going to read, why are going to read or ask them to predict what the story is going to be from the cover of the book. Childrencould use their background knowledge to make predictions of what the text is going to be about. Teachers should make an effort to make sure to ask questions from the whole class. The questions should be open-ended so that children are able to respond from their own experiences, such as "what do they think the book is going to be about?" "why do they think this happened?" Teachers could also use a concept map called a KWL chart where children put down what they know (K), what they want to know (W), and after they have read what they learned (L) from their reading.

Stage 2: Reading: This is a very important part of the modeling of the reading process. Before beginning the reading process, the teacher could hold the book, turn the pages one-by-one and ask children to tell the story from the pictures. Teachers should read out the book aloud with expressions. At the same time—they should ask questions about the text at appropriate to make sure children comprehend the text. For read alouds, Big Books are a good resource. If Big Books are not available, small size texts could be used. In both cases, the teacher should make sure that children can see the text and the pictures. After the first or second reading of the text, children could be provided with texts of their own they can read in pairs.

Stage 3: Responding to the storybook read is an integral part of the reading process. As explained above, it could be done through a "picture walk", or by asking questions before, during and at the end of the text. Children could also respond to a text using a "KWL" as described above. Drawing or writing are also important ways to respond to a text. Children could be asked to draw their favourite character or incident in the text or write about it using invented spellings.

Stage 4: Exploration allows children to get new information from the text. The teacher may re-read part or the entire story—especially sections that children found enjoyable. Children learn new vocabulary words that they come across in the text. Exploration is very important for young children because it allows them to learn more about things they know and also discover new things they did not know about.

Stage 5: Applying enables children to not just understand the story/information in the text—but use it in their own way. Teachers can encourage children to apply their new knowledge by projects that children could do in groups or individually.

Understanding the Reading Process

Good readers understand the processes involved in reading and consciously control them. This awareness and control of the reading processes is called metacognition, which means "knowing about knowing." Some children don't know when they don't know. They continue to read even though they are not comprehending. Poor readers tolerate such confusion because they either don't realize that it exists or don't know what to do about it. Poor readers focus on facts, whereas good readers try to assimilate details into a larger cognitive pattern.

When we read a text, we use many strategies. As teachers are modeling the process of reading to the children, it is important to model the process of reading for young children. Some of these strategies are as follows:

Predict: Even though we may not know what a story is about before actually reading it, we can make a guess by looking at the pictures on the front cover and inside. Teachers can use such strategies to make predictions about thoughts, events, outcomes, and conclusions. As the teacher reads on, children's predictions are confirmed or not confirmed. This process enables children to make new prediction and learn how texts can surprise!

Picture: A good strategy for teachers is to ask children to form images of a certain aspect of a text as they are reading. Children could be asked to close their eyes and say aloud what they picture in their heads. This strategy triggers mental images in the minds of the reader that increases understandings of the text. Children could also be asked to draw what they picture.

Relate: This strategy helps children to draw comparisons. As teachers model this strategy, children can relate their existing knowledge to the new information in the text. This could be something they saw or heard about previously. This enables children to understand the new information that is presented to them.

Monitor: This helps children to check their understanding of the story/text that has been read out by the teacher. As the teacher is reading the story or children are trying to read on their own, this strategy helps them to make sure that there are no gaps in their reading comprehension. If there are gaps, children can go back and see where they have missed information. Teachers can use graphic organisers to help children create a map of the story they have read.

Systems of Language Cues

Language is governed by various systems. Children make meaning by combining their background knowledge with their use of language cues. In order to communicate with one another, children need various kinds of linguistic and textual cues.

Semantic Cues: This refer to the meaning in language that assists in comprehending texts, including words, speech, signs, symbols, and other meaning-bearing forms. Semantic cues involve the learners' prior knowledge of language, text, and visual media, and their prior life experiences. Many of the conventions of visual media fall under the umbrella of semantic cues. Teachers can scaffold children' use of semantic knowledge by relating new concepts to concepts already familiar to the children. Gradually, children independently relate new information to what is known and personally meaningful.

Syntactic cues involve word order, rules and patterns of language (grammar), and punctuation. For example, the position a word holds in a sentence will cue the listener or reader as to whether the word is a noun or a verb. Conversely, listeners and readers use their intuitive knowledge of grammar to predict what words are likely to appear next. Oral punctuation provides cues to meaning through rhythm and flow, pauses, inflection, and voice modulation.

Graphophonic cues involve the letter-sound or sound-symbol relationships of language. Readers identifying unknown words by relating speech sounds to letters or letter patterns are using graphophonic cues. This process is often called decoding. Decoding is not, as the word may imply, a mechanical process but an essential means of making meaning. Graphophonic cues are used to support semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic cues to help readers determine if a word is logical or makes sense. In early literacy development, some children over-rely on graphophonic cues and attempt to sound out every word. They need to be encouraged to think about what word would make sense and fit in the sentence pattern or context.

*Textual Cues*are used by learners in text such as titles, headings and sub-headings, bold print or italics, captions, and other text features to construct meaning. Learning to read graphs and charts is also part of the comprehension process. Text-structure cues give insight into the author's organizational patterns and thought processes in different types of texts, such as narrative, expository, dramatic, and poetic. Children who attend to textual cues are better able to comprehend, organize, and remember information presented in texts than those who do not.

In the reading process, learners use all the cues simultaneously and not sequentially.

Practical: Chose an age-appropriate illustrated story book for children in theirmother tongue (such as "BillikeBachche" or "Lalu and Peelu' inHindi or any other book in Telugu). Give the book tothe child and observe the child's reading behavior according to theguidelines that you have studied in theory paper.

Unit 3: Emergent Literacy Framework: A Developmental View of Reading and Writing

Emergent literacy is a developmental process from birth to ages five or six when children are interacting with oral language and print and acquire the foundations for reading and writing. Even though children may not be able to read or write on their own, many are exposed to various forms of print and ways of reading and writing from an early age - with bedtime stories to speaking skills all preparing a child for the reading and writing during the later years of schooling. It is important to note here that oral language plays an important part in the process of development of emergent reading and writing skills among children. Emergent literacy and conventional forms of literacy are seen in continuum in the process of literacy development.

Emergent literacy was originally conceived by Marie Clay as a way to convey this process of development of emergent reading and writing. The idea is that if children are exposed to print forms of literacy, they will perform better during their later years. Emergent reading is only one component of what emergent literacy stands for. When young children listen and interact with those around them their vocabulary develops - and this sets the foundations for how they will perform when they start their education. Prolonged exposure to speaking, listening, writing or reading; a combination; or all elements of literacy, can support the ability of the child in many ways.

Emergent writing skills do not necessarily have to be seen through writing down letters, words or simple sentences in the conventional way. With young children being naturally creative, even scribbling can allow them to become acquainted with the process of writing that we use to communicate through conventional writing forms. Children could start writing before reading because it allows children to put down their ideas/thinking on a piece of paper. This could be through drawing, scribbling or writing of mock letters. With the frequent exposure and experience with books, or various words around them, children will try to replicate this in their writing work.

Emergent reading in particular can be enhanced when teachers or parents model the process of reading to them by pointing to pictures or words. Many times for children, a favorite book becomes a part of the routine at the preschool, bedtime or during the day. As a child becomes more familiar with the storyline and the pages within the book, they will associate the words they are hearing with the words that they see on the page. Teachers can enhance this process by pointing to words while they are readingand also explain definitions of words which might be around them in their everyday life. This can also strengthen vocabulary.

Books, magazines and other forms of media can all be extremely useful in emergent literacy - and you can capture your child's imagination by ensuring that it is rich with illustrations and color. This, when combined with your encouragement for your child to draw, doodle and scribble will ensure that their emergent literacy stages are positive, and that they are fully prepared for the schooling journey which is ahead of them. Every child is different, and so it can be vital for you to align your expectations to how your child is progressing.

Researchers have identified the following six components that are essential in the emergent literacy development process:

Oral language (especially listening comprehension, vocabulary, and narrative knowledge): This is critical for children to make connections with print forms. Oral language enables children to connect with print forms by telling stories using pictures, talking about experiences that they can write or draw about and so on.

Phonological awareness: refers to children's ability to detect and manipulate the sound structures of oral language. It begins at birth as infants attend to their caregivers' voices. As children begin to understand that words are comprised of individual sounds (phonemes), they begin to be able to manipulate these sounds. The manipulation of individual sounds and the letters associated with the sounds is known as phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness may be demonstrated through the ability to isolate, add, or delete phonemes from words and is related to the ability, among older children, to decode words and to use invented spelling.

Concept development: Children with a strong oral language and vocabulary tend to have diverse concepts about the world. They have accurate abstract and general ideas, derived from specific real-world experiences, about how the world around them works and about the people, objects, activities, and events within that world.Concepts about the world will help children comprehend the content of writing in daily routines and in storybooks

Knowledge of the conventions of print: Print conventions enable children to understand how to use books (as described in the previous section).

Alphabetic knowledge: This is ability to name the letters of the alphabet based on their shapes. It refers to the ability to see a letter and say the name of it (as opposed to being able to recite the alphabet song).

Environmental factors: These are the contexts from which children come from. It could be the sociocultural, linguistic, economic or other factors that could influence the child's interaction at the preschool. It is important for teachers to provide a supportive literacy environment in the preschool. The common elements in children's environments that encourage the development of literacy are adult-child interactions; the ready availability of books and writing materials; opportunities to observe others engaging in functional reading and writing, such as writing lists or reading a newspaper; and the presence of adults who value reading and who recognize that children's literacy efforts are important.

Practical: Narrate a story to a group of four children. After narration give eachchild a A4 sheet of paper. Ask the children to now express the storyon paper in whichever they want. For example, you can say, "Tell mesomething about the story which you liked using this paper and crayons." Analyze what stage of writing the child is in (Rememberdrawing is a stage of writing).

Unit 4: Diversity in the Classroom: Pedagogical Implications

Many adults pay little attention to children's conversations and ideas. Young children are beginning speakers, often taking a long time to make a point or repeating ideas over again. Teachers need to show children that they respect children by attentively listening to their conversations. When children interact with teachers at preschool who allow them the time they need to respond, and respond with cues such as repeating key points of the children's statements, children will both gain confidence in their conversational skills.

Preschool teachers should to take into account the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of the children, the variety of languages spoken and the multiplicity of their socio cultural backgrounds. In the preschool environment, often marked by practices anchored in the system of the dominant language of the classroom, this is a great challenge for a teacher. The child who leaves the language of her family does not understand why this language is not entitled to be used in the classroom. S/he often feels that the language of her/his family is considered to be some kind of problem at school. It is well known that negative representations of language/bilingualism among children particularly affect their language skills.

The notion of linguistic variety must be emphasized. Every child experiences this variation even before entering school, since he encounters his/her "mother" language in exchanges with multiple persons and in various situations. As such, from birth, even the monolingual child hears different ways of speaking. Later, upon entering school, s/he will have to face new challenges presented by the language of schooling. But at school, the variety of languages spoken is rarely taken into account. It seems important to us here to insist on the fact that a language is always pluralistic, that no one speaks a language in the same way because no one lives it in the same way. Plurality exists within a single language spoken by the same person, for example a child who speaks with his/her parents at home or answers a question asked by his teacher is not in the same linguistic context as when he is playing with his classmates in the yard.

What teachers will notice first of all childrenwho do not speak the language spoken in the classroom will be the deviations from the norm in the language of the preschool. The greater the children's competence in the language of the school, the less developed his dominance of his native language may appear. However, these deviations are merely traces of an interlanguage, the journey towards mastery of a language. They do not always reveal competence in the other language of the bilingual child, since the latter has no place in the school and, in general, teachers have no knowledge of these languages and rarely have a bilingual or plurilingual experience that could have made them aware of what it means to be bilingual or plurilingual. The lack of training in language varieties, the importance given in the curriculum to the priority of teaching the national language (Young and Helot, 2003), and more recently the introduction of learning a foreign language at the age of six in many European countries, often prevents teachers from thinking about the different languages and learning processes existent at school.

It is generally accepted that the teacher, as the person responsible for the transmission of knowledge and know-how to children within the institutional framework of the school, must ensure that the children feels comfortable at school, creating a climate of trust in which

exchanges are facilitated. It is therefore a question of recognizing children's own linguistic and cultural knowledge, in order to understand their identity.

Sharon Griffin summarized five principles of instruction that have emerged from research in cognitive science: (1) knowledge is constructed, (2) through active participation, (3) in a social context, (4) in which forms of communication developed in the culture are encouraged and available, and (5) used to establish a community of learners. Practices that support these principles include small- group instruction, ample opportunities for children to participate and work directly with materials, and tasks that enable children to discover new ideas and concepts in the process of working with materials.

Practical: Observe a classroom of 6 year olds for half an hour when the teacheris actively engaging with the children. Make detailed notes on thelanguage used by the teacher and the language(s) used by children.Critically analyze your observations with respect to the debates aboutschool and home language.Carry three common objects with you in the classroom. Ask thechildren what do they call these objects. Record the various labelsgiven by children. Analyze what this tells you about the diversity oflanguage in the classroom.

Unit 5: Children's Literature: Selection and Use

With preschoolers, reading aloud comes alive. They learn that print carries meaning, that stories are organized in a certain way, and can delight in the sounds of words and rhymes. Many preschoolers enjoy having the same book read to them over and over—not because they are trying to drive the adult reader crazy, but because they learn through immersion and are comfortable with what is familiar to them. Repeated readings help children gain a sense of competence, control, and self-esteem. Predictable books enable them to join in the reading aloud process and to return to these books on their own. They can discuss the books that have been read aloud and relate them to their lives.

The literature is also very consistent in its conviction that reading aloud needs to take place every day and continue long after children have learned to read. In fact, research on older students underscores that the more often children are read to, the higher achieving students will be academically. Daily reading aloud to young children is felt to be a minimum standard. Trelease compares these daily read aloud sessions to commercials on the pleasures of reading.

The literature is additionally consistent in concluding that reading aloud does not mean that an adult reads to a passive child who absorbs its magic by some type of literary osmosis. On the contrary, to be effective reading aloud must involve the child as an active participant in the reading process, as described above.

While every adult who reads aloud has a somewhat idiosyncratic style, David Dickinson has identified three distinct ones:

Didactic-interactional: Children are "not asked to make inferences of any kind or to reflect on the content by making connections to their personal experiences," and teachers' questions center on "low-level cognitive demands" or prompting children to "chime in" and repeat parts of the text

Co-constructivist: Teachers engage children in extended discussion before reading and stop several times during reading to "help children understand the plot of the story and the characters by directing the children's attention to the text and pictures" and assisting them in making personal connections between reading and their own experiences.

Performance-oriented: A performance-oriented style focuses on a dramatic reading experience using affect and dramatic techniques to emphasize meaning. In this style, teachers "read in a dramatic manner and stop only occasionally for conversation" and ask questions "similar to the co-constructive style" However, there is generally more follow-up conversation after reading than with the co-constructivist style, and this conversation has been found to "lead children to make links between the books and their experiences, to reflect on certain aspects of the story, or to guide them through a reconstruction of the story"

Dickinson reports that although the sample size was small, a study of children's vocabulary scores at the end of kindergarten indicated that "children in performance-oriented classrooms had better Receptive Vocabulary scores than children experiencing didactic-interactional readings,"

while children in co-constructivist classrooms "were not significantly different from those for either of the other two groups" It seems that the co-constructivist style would be worthwhile to pursue along with the performance oriented method, as both lead children into deeper discussions of the text and to make the personal connections that will help to foster a love of reading and a sense of its importance. Perhaps we can draw the instructional implication from these findings that co-constructivist teachers should incorporate more affect and follow-up discussion in their read-aloud experiences.

The point to be made is that all of these reading aloud styles are most effective when teachers make them participatory. Teachers who support interactive reading, where children and the teacher ask each other questions and discuss matters centered on the text, foster children's understanding of both text and vocabulary. Inviting children to discuss the story leads to greater comprehension, as "the talk that surrounds the storybook reading…gives it power, helping children to bridge what is in the story with their own lives" (NAEYC & IRA Position Startement, 1998, p.7).

Opportunities for children's participation naturally grow as children age. Preschoolers can can make increasingly complex inferences and analysis, including making predictions about the story and drawing connections to their own experiences. Older children can also help actually read the text with the teacher during shared reading experiences. This read-aloud technique lets the teacher scaffold a group of children's reading by gradually having them take over reading aloud a repeatedly read text over a period of time:

In Shared Reading, enlarged texts are used so that the teacher and the whole group can read together collaboratively. The same text or text extract is used over a week as part of the first fifteen minutes of a daily literacy session. Shared Reading bridges the gap between reading to children and independent reading by children. During the first reading the teacher takes responsibility for demonstrating reading behavior as she reads the text to the class. Then, during subsequent readings of the same text the children are gradually given more control as they read aloud in unison and discuss features of the text.

*There are recognized approaches and techniques that will enhance the reading aloud experience.*Because research evidence points so heavily to the benefits of reading aloud, much work has been done in identifying practices that will maximize the effectiveness of the read aloud experience. Presented below are a compilation of basic techniques that preschool teachers might effectively use:

– Try to establish a regular time for reading aloud
– Find a quiet, comfortable place. With young children, snuggling together while reading is important.
– Remove background distractions so that the reading experience takes precedence.
– Select a book that you like (and have previewed) and that you think the child will like, too
– Point out the cover illustration and the names of the book's author and illustrator
– Have fun bringing the characters and events to life. Read with expression.
– Read slowly enough for children to take in the words and look at the pictures.

– Stop during the reading to invite children to complete a predictable phrase or sentence, to guess what might happen next, or think about how they themselves might react in a similar situation
– Encourage children to ask questions
– Watch the children's body language; children may need a break or even to end the session. Try to determine if it's the child's need to fidget or the choice of a story that's boring to the child that's causing the problem.
– Talk about the book afterwards. Be sure to elicit the child's reaction.
– If the read aloud experience is of a frequently read book, ask the child to retell the story in his own words

It is important to read aloud with expressions. Here are some important things for teachers to keep in mind when they are doing a read aloud:

– Reading aloud is not enough we need to read aloud well.
– As we read the story we need to remain aware of our body position, our eyes, and their expression, our eye-contact with the child, our vocal variety, and our general facial animation.
– There is no exact right way of reading aloud, other than to be as expressive as possible.
– If we read a story without allowing its emotional value to show through our eyes we're wasting a prime asset.
– In choosing a reading voice, we don't want to go so far as to be absurd or embarrassing. The one thing to avoid in reading aloud is a cutesy, sugary, patronizing voice. We have to make a conscious decision never to talk down to children.
– We can do at least seven things with our voices to keep our readers engaged. Six of these seven are contrasts: loud and soft: fast and slow; and high and low. And we can p-a-u-s-e. The words on the page will tell us which to choose. We don't need speech training.
– One of the easiest ways of attempting excellence when you're reading aloud is to really see, in our mind's eye, the things we're reading about.
– The way we speak our first line should be sensational.
– If anything could be more important than the first line of a story, it's the last line. Drag out the last line; the more slowly we say it, the more satisfied our listeners will be.

For preschoolers: Julie Coiro offers this advice:

– Set a special routine time and comfortable location for reading.
– Encourage children to connect the stories they hear and the characters and events in those stories to people and events in their own lives.
– Encourage children to relive the story through drama, art, and music.
– Encourage children to play with the rhymes and sounds of the story's language (to develop phonemic awareness). As Mem Fox puts it: "Rhymers will be readers; it's that simple. Experts in literacy and child development have discovered that if children know eight nursery rhymes by heart by the time they're 4 years old, they're usually among the best readers by the time they're 8."

- Choose some books to read aloud that are a few levels above the child's current skill level, to introduce new vocabulary and concepts
- Let children see that the reader is truly enjoying the story and sharing his or her enjoyment with them.

Choosing books for young children:

Preschoolers are an ideal audience for reading aloud activities. Young preschoolers still favor stories about children and families. Older preschoolers enjoy humor and fantasy. Many preschoolers who are on the cusp of reading even enjoy hearing chapter books read to them.

In choosing books for preschoolers, bear in mind that they are developmentally ready to be exposed to a wide range of stories. They can identify with others, so now is the time to be sure there is diversity in what is read to them, both in terms of subject matter and type of literature genre. Poetry and nonfiction are just as suited to read alouds as fiction.

Experts suggest that books for preschoolers be rich in language, have meaningful plots, compelling characters, and engaging illustrations. Teachers should consider the following questions in choosing books to read aloud with preschoolers:

- Is the book worthy of both the reader's and listener's time?
- Does the story sound good to the ear when read aloud?
- Will the child find the book relevant to his culture and life?
- Will the book spark conversation?
- Will the book inspire the child to find or listen to another book on the same topic? By the same author? Written in the same genre?
- Is the story memorable?
- Will the child want to hear the story again?

Books should be attractively arranged on low, open shelving with their covers facing out to spark children's interests. Draw children's attention to special books by displaying them on the shelf with props related to the story next to it.Decorate the walls near the book shelves or the sides and backs of shelving. Book jackets, photos of children with the teacher or their families reading, and children's artwork can all make this area more inviting. Charts and signs help create a print-rich environment. Display the alphabet at a child's eye-level near the table that is used for writing so that children will have a model when writing. Light the area well. Children shouldn't have to strain their eyes. Natural light, if possible, is always best.

Selecting Books

There are many wonderful and appropriate books written especially for young children. For selecting books, it is important to begin with the interests, life experiences, and skills of the children. Young children's attention is centered on themselves, their families, their homes, and their friends.

Appropriate books for younger preschoolers have the following characteristics:

- a simple plot about familiar experiences;
- colorful and bold illustrations that are clear and filled with detail;
- illustrations drawn from the child's point of view;
- lots of repetition in the story; and
- rich language (rhymes, nonsense words, and repetition).

Older preschoolers like books with a story line. Their attention span is longer and they appreciate humor and fantasy. Books that are appropriate for them have these characteristics:
- a plot that can be followed;
- a story with humor or perhaps a surprise ending;
- imaginative accounts of things they know can't happen;
- stories that extend their understanding of the world around them;
- colorful illustrations with lots of details; and
- stories about faraway places and other cultures with elements similar to their own experiences.

Books for all children should challenge prejudice, bias, and stereotyping and convey positive messages to children about differences of all kinds. This means that selected books should show the following:
- men and women in a variety of roles, displaying the ability to make decisions, solve problems, care for family members, and work outside the home;
- a variety of family configurations (e.g., a father and child, two children and a grandmother, etc.);
- illustrations that portray people realistically (e.g., mothers who wear clothing other than aprons and people of various ethnic origins portrayed realistically, not stereotypically);
- people of all ethnic backgrounds who can be assertive, have and solve problems, make decisions, take on a variety of family roles, and display a wide range of emotions; and
- adults and children with disabilities who participate in all aspects of life, including mainstreamed schooling, an active family life, and participation in sports and other recreational activities.

If there are children in the preschool whose home language is something other than language spoken in the classroom, teachers need to include picture books written in that language. This sends a powerful message to the child and to the families that their language is honored and respected. It also enables children to participate in the classroom activities using their oral languages.

The key word to consider when selecting books for preschool programmeme is "variety". It is a good idea to select books that begin with and extend the interests, life experiences, and skills of the children. It allows children to make connections to something meaningful in their lives. Young children's attention is centered on themselves, their families, their homes, and their friends. They like stories about characters they can identify with.

After a few monthsof preschool, select books that go beyond the "here and now" to broaden their knowledge of the world. A child who is interested in cats as a pet might be interested in looking

at books that have animals as the main characters, or picture books featuring animals. If a child is fascinated by airplanes, she might enjoy browsing books about rockets and space shuttles.

Multicultural books are another way of broadening children's experiences. Most importantly, include books depicting the cultures of the children who attend the programme as well as other cultural contexts. Listening to stories, folktales, and experiences of children from other cultures helps develop sensitivity and appreciation for other groups of people.

Select books in which children can be active participants. After a few readings, children can learn to retell the story word-for-word as they look at the book independently or read to a doll. This helps children view themselves as readers and gives them the opportunity to "practice" reading.

Select books that enrich children's language development. When children hear complex language and vocabulary, they will be more successful in understanding what they are reading in later years. The language in children's non-predictable books is typically more formal than our spoken language. Books rich in language help build children's vocabularies and pave the way for success in learning to read.

Select books that help children gain knowledge of the alphabet and phonological awareness. Research tells us that children who are knowledgeable about the alphabet and who understand that words are made up of separate sounds are more likely to experience success when they are learning to read. As children look at alphabet books, they are more likely to talk about the letters they see.

It isn't necessary to gather a large inventory of books at the start of the year. Many teachers find that when they regularly rotate books, children have the feeling of seeing new books or they are reminded of old favorites not seen for awhile.

Materials for Story Retelling

Retelling stories is a powerful way for children to build comprehension skills, language structure and a sense of story. After children have heard a story several times and seen the story retold using props, they will want to retell it independently. For retellings, select books that have story lines that are easy to follow. In addition, look for books with

– repetitive phrases
– familiar sequences
– conversation
– classic or familiar titles

Include materials that encourage children to tell their own stories and dramatize stories they have heard. Props such as these will enhance the storytelling experience:

– Flannel board
– Velcro board
– Magnetic board

- Storytelling apron
- Puppets (made from cloth, popsicle sticks, paper bags, or wooden spoons)
- Story clothesline (children use clothespins to hang pictures from a story in the correct sequence on a clothesline)
- Props from the dramatic play area

Practical: Carry out this activity in pairs. One member of the pair narrates astory to a group of children. The second person provides detailedfeedback about the various aspects of the narration. Then thesecond person narrates another story to the same or another groupof children and the first person provides feedback.

Unit 6: Creating a Language Learning Environment: Principles and Practices

Teachers engage in language and literacy activities throughout the day in a preschool classroom. Conversations abound in which teachers elicit language from children and ask them to transcribe that language. For example, a teacher conducting a science lesson may request hypotheses, observations, and conclusions from children in an oral and written form. Teachers also facilitate language and literacy exploration with games and activities that children can use one-to-one, independently, or with peers. Finally, teachers demonstrate their own participation in language and literacy through modeling its use continually throughout the day. Teachers can demonstrate writing on the board by recording what children share in class discussions.

As teachers design their learning environment, it is essential that they consider the diverse needs and skills of the children they teach. As they integrate the skills and background of their diverse children, teachers should ensure that each child is represented in their classroom design and instruction. They can individualize the environment to meet the needs of children with disabilities and ensure appropriate opportunities to participate in literacy activities are consistently available. "Children with diverse literacy experiences have difficulty making connections between old and new information" (Gunn, Simmons, &Kameenui, 1995, 5). Structuring the classroom in a planned manner that immerses children with disabilities in accessible literacy activities provides them with opportunities to create connections between oral and written language, thereby gaining access to the general education curriculum.

Language and literacy-related activities need to be infused into the daily schedule. As noted above, literacy activities, while centered in an area with books, tapes, and writing materials, need not be confined to any one area of the preschool classroom. Language and literacy learning goes on throughout the day.Teachers can incorporate these activities into the daily schedule to promote literacy for preschoolers by:
- Reading to children every day.
- Singing songs and learning finger plays.
- Writing what children say.
- Providing a variety of opportunities to use language.
- Displaying books and providing time and place for children to explore.
- Encouraging children to write.
- Surrounding children with printed materials, signs, and posters.

These goals are best achieved by thinking about how literacy can be integrated into all learning activities. Dramatic play, for example, provides a rich opportunity to infuse literacy into children's play. To illustrate, a doctor's office play scenario might include a sign-in sheet for patients, magazines to read while waiting to see the doctor, an eye chart to test vision, and a prescription pad for the doctor to fill in. There are also patient charts to complete and the doctor's bill to dispense. Here are some other of the many possibilities for integrating literacy into dramatic play:

Literacy Materials:	How Children Could Use Them:
Menus	– Read menus in a restaurant
Food containers	– Read food packages

Calendars	– Write appointments on a calendar
Cookbooks	– Read recipes in cookbooks
Tickets	– Use tickets to play bus, movie theater, sports event
Storybooks	– Read stories to other children, dolls or stuffed animals
Paper or notepads and pencils	– Make shopping lists
Cardboard, markers, and tape	– Write and post signs for play grocery store
Pad of sales slips	– Write food orders, prescriptions, and receipts

Activity	Literacy Focus
Blocks	– Have paper, markers, and tape available for children to make signs for block building – Include books on architecture and building to inspire children – Encourage children to make blueprints of buildings they wish to make
Toys & Games	– Discuss colors, shapes, and pictures in lotto games – Provide matching games for visual discrimination
Art	– Invite children to dictate stories to go with art work – Share books about famous artists and their work with children
Sand & Water	– Add literacy props such as letter molds or road signs to the sand table – Encourage children to use words to describe how the sand and water feel
Music & Movement	– Write words to a favorite song on a chart – Have children use instruments for the sound effects in stories
Cooking	– Use pictures and words on recipe cards – Have a sign-up sheet for snack
Computers	– Use a word processing programme to make a book – Listen to audio
Outdoors	– Bring colored chalk and other writing materials outside – Have children observe street signs in the neighborhood
Group Times	– Read, tell, and dramatize stories every day – Lead discussions on how to listen to others
Daily Routines	– Use pictures and words to create a daily schedule that children can refer to – Have children sign-in each day

Adults need to interact with children in ways that promote literacy. Providing children with an environment and materials that foster literacy are crucial; but they are not enough. To make these literacy efforts truly successful, teachers also have to interact with children in ways that make literacy activities meaningful.

There is a strong connection between early reading success and the amount of decontextualized talk that children engage in with adults. Simply put, this means conversation that goes beyond the here and now—language that conveys information about other times and places leads to

literacy learning. Decontextualized conversations allow children to relate first-hand experiences to the greater world. It is particularly important when preschool teachers read a story with a child. Rather than merely reading the text word for word, when the teacher stops to discuss the book's meaning with a child, she engages the child in decontextualized talk.

Quality conversations and the amount of one-on-one or small group interactions that children engage in are highly related to language measures. In addition, cognitively challenging conversation and the use of a wide vocabulary by teachers are correlated with children's subsequent language and literacy development. The quality and quantity of interactions, not just the presence of reading materials and a story time routine, shapes early reading development. Early readers talk more frequently about literacy with adults, have interactions that contain more instances of extending a topic, and exhibit more accountability for their language.

Teachers need a range of teaching strategies to facilitate children's development of literacy skills. This is because the ability to read and write is not natural like oral language. It needs to be taught with careful planning and instruction. For very young children like preschoolers, literacy instruction involves both indirect and direct instruction. Children need opportunities to explore books and print on their own. They also need to be guided in their literacy explorations. Some ways that children could be supported in the preschool are:

- Model reading and writing daily.
- Create opportunities for children to use literacy-related skills (creative dramatization, making books, communication games, field trips).
- Share high-quality children's books and magazines, especially those related to what the children are investigating.
- Read aloud daily to the whole class (before nap, after nap, during group time), to individual children, or to small groups when they ask or when the time seems right.
- Read stories more than once so children can master content and use of language.
- Encourage the children to discuss books: to comment, to ask questions, and to make predictions about what will happen next.
- Encourage children to look at books and magazines at naptime.
- Help children integrate reading and writing into their play.
- Share songs, rhymes, and fingerplays with the children.
- Foster children's use of oral language.
- Invite children to converse about their investigations.
- Take dictation from the children as they tell stories, label their artwork, prepare messages for others, or discuss things they have learned.
- Invite children to record their ideas and findings on phone/computer or on paper, as drawings, tallies, words, etc.
- Invite children to use writing materials as part of their play.
- Plan activities that include recognition of letters, words and numbers, such as cooking or mapping.
- Welcome volunteers who can read to or take dictation from the children. Remember they may need orientation or training.

- Encourage social literacy experiences such as sharing a book with a buddy or writing with a volunteer.
- Carefully select the programmes and videos children watch, and limit (or eliminate) the time children spend watching TV or videos.
- Help parents become involved in children's preliteracy experiences.

Practical

- Write a group story about a neighborhood walk. Ask open-ended questions to help children recall what they did and saw on the walk. Write their comments on a large piece of paper. Use English and home languages as appropriate. Read the story aloud and then hang the paper where everyone can see it. Interested children can draw pictures to illustrate the story. Some children can retell the story to themselves. Staff and volunteers can reread it aloud to interested children.
- Have children act out their dictated stories with props and dress-up clothes or with puppets. Children can make their own puppets by drawing the characters, cutting them out, and taping or gluing them to the ends of plastic straws. They can move the puppets by holding the other ends of the straws.
- Plan and carry out daily cooking activities. Make picture recipe cards that provide step-by-step directions. Have children "read" the recipe by putting the cards in sequence and reviewing each step. After the food has been prepared and eaten, children can talk about what they did first, next, and so on and how the food looked and tasted. Some children may want to make their own recipe cards to take home.
- Provide something interesting to talk, write, and read about. Sit on the floor with the children. Pass around a variety of fruit and vegetable seeds (for example, an avocado pit, apple seeds, and squash seeds) for children to touch, smell, and examine. Say that these are mystery items. Ask children to describe these items by comparing their size, color, shape, and texture. Show children the fruits and vegetables that go with each seed. Serve a snack featuring these fruits and vegetables with dips. Read a book about seeds.
- Invite children to talk about whatever is of interest to them--their families, what they did yesterday, what they will do tomorrow, something they saw on the way to family child care, a funny thing a baby brother said. Write their personal stories on a large piece of paper and read them back to individuals or the group.
- Record children's questions, thoughts, and ideas as they take part in an indepth study or project. At the beginning of the study, write down children's questions and comments and post them next to photographs of the children engaged in activities. As the study proceeds, continue documenting what's happening--what the children say and do. Read the words to children and talk about what they are learning.
- Have children sign-in daily when they first arrive. Make use of sign-in sheets if children need to wait for a turn or to acknowledge they've helped themselves to a snack.

Unit 7: Learning to Read and Write:

While we already know that learning to read and write are complicated processes involving decoding as well as comprehension strategies. For decades, reading wars have raged among proponents of two approaches (i.e., The phonics method and The look-say / whole-word / whole language method. Linguists, educators, politicians and parents are all actively involved in this debate over reading methods. These days, educators have proposed that we not only need a more skill based instruction but also one that engages children in rich literature based discussions and encourages critical thinking. Some of these approaches are:

Whole Language: This goes by different names: whole language, look and say, sight reading, or whole word. It is as much an educational philosophy as a reading method, for it emphasizes capturing meaning over systematic decoding of sound parts. The whole language emphasis considers language a natural phenomenon and literacy a natural function.With the whole language method, children are taught to recognize the sight of the whole word, rather than its letter parts. Theoretically, the method goes from the whole to the part. Flash cards and graded readers are features of this approach.

While this method can lead to early success in reading and writing, it is today considered insufficient in itself. Having not learnt the phonetic decoding system, children face difficulty when deciphering new words, for they cannot deconstruct them. Critics have argued that this method is responsible for the emergence of reading disabilities, which did not exist in the past when children of different ages studied together in one classroom. They also assert that such an approach forces children to learn English as if it were Chinese. Many politicians, particularly in the United States, have blamed whole language reading instruction for falling literacy rates. Proponents of the system point to other factors as responsible for the decline in reading abilities.

Nevertheless, it may be helpful to use the whole language method in a limited way to teach children a number of very common English words such as 'you' and 'the', which do not follow phonetic rules. Relying on the whole language method alone could leave holes in a child's reading abilities.

The Phonics Method: Phonics is one of the oldest and most well-known methods for teaching children to read and write English.In phonics instruction, children are taught the sounds of the letters. What is important is that the child comes to associate the shape of the letter with the sound it makes. Once individual letter-sounds are mastered, children are taught how to blend them together to read words. Similarly, children taught through the phonics method can learn how to spell correctly by sounding out the word.

Because mastering the sounds of letters may be boring to young children, it is important to keep lessons short and lively. A variety of reading games should be included to keep the child engaged. It is also necessary to utilize phonetic readers, particularly in the early stages, to help the child master phonetic patterns.

*Balanced literacy approach:*Balanced literacy is about balancing explicit language instruction with independent learning and language exploration. It aims to strike a balance between both

whole language and phonics when learning to read. The strongest elements of each are incorporated into a literacy program that aims to guide students toward proficient and lifelong reading. A typical balanced literacy framework consists of five components including read aloud, guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, and word study.

Pearson (1996) identifies the following basic principals of balanced literacy: (a) teachers base their instruction on their deep knowledge of language and learning, taking advantage of the natural relationship between oral and written language, (b) learning to read is an intellectual achievement rather than an acquisition of skills, (c) phonemic awareness and letter recognition can be recognized in engaged settings and activities can be assessed in productive engaging tasks rather than through decontextualized activities, and (d) thoughtful teachers hold high expectations for all their students and provide within classroom learning communities the kind of authentic, integrated curriculum and real-life demonstrations of literacy that will help students understand the connectedness of school learning to life-long learning.

It has also been noted that balanced reading is a philosophical perspective, not a particular method or group of methods that teachers must follow (Fitzgerald, 1999). The implementation of a balanced literacy program reveals beliefs about literacy instruction of the teacher by giving an equal emphasis on all aspects. Fitzgerald further recommends that in a balanced literacy program the teacher needs to focus on helping students gain "local knowledge," which includes phonics, syntax, and semantics; "global knowledge," which includes an understanding of the texts and reader response; and "affective knowledge" which includes building a positive attitude to reading and a desire to read (p. 102).

Five dimensions of "balance" are especially useful in relation to a classroom of learners from diverse backgrounds (Au, 2001). The first is related to authenticity, which calls for literature to be selected with a focus on the students, that is, how it relates to them and their experiences and helps them relate literacy to their own lives. The second is response to literature, which entails teachers paying attention to the interpretations of the literature by the students instead of solely seeking predetermined correct answers. The third aspect is level of control by the teacher, such that teachers maintain a balance between explicit instruction and total participation by the students at all times. The teacher should be flexible and change the instructional pattern depending on what is required in a particular situation. The fourth aspect crucial for balanced instruction is skill contextualization which implies that skills, (e.g., decoding) should be taught in meaningful contexts. Skills are important to teach but the teacher also should ensure that students can learn and apply them. The last of the factors mentioned is curricular control, which requires that teachers be able to make decisions regarding the curriculum and their instruction of literacy. Although the combination of phonics and literature is not very well defined in the literature, the actual implementation of balanced literacy depends on the teacher to a large extent. Thus, teachers play a crucial role in implementing the right balance of literature and skills instruction so that participation by the students is maximized. Since flexibility and instruction based on the learners' worlds characterize the implementation of a balanced literacy program, the actual implementation is ultimately determined by the teacher.

Four-blocks Approach: This a balanced literacy programmewith a daily basis of four elements of literacy instruction -- guided reading, self-selected reading, writing and working with words. By

relying on a variety of instructional methods, teachers give students the opportunity to practice literacy skills in a way that allows them to utilize their strengths while working towards mastery in areas of weakness.

- *Guided Reading:* During the guided reading block, small groups of students gather with their teacher to work on reading skills from a shared text. Guided reading groups are often leveled, which means that teachers form guided reading groups strategically to place children of similar reading or skill levels together in a group. These groups are flexible and change over time as students' skill levels increase or as the focal skill changes. When they are in guided reading, students each have their own copy of a basal reader or a small paperback book to read from. Guided reading blocks often have a writing component as well as time for reading and discussion.

- *Self-Selected Reading*: Self-selected reading, also commonly called independent reading, is the time when students are free to read books of their own choosing, on their own level. Most classrooms in grades kindergarten through four have a classroom library that is sorted by subject and reading level. In lower grades, students maintain a small basket, or bag of self-selected books that are slightly below, just at and slightly above their reading level. In older grades students have an on-level chapter book that they read during this time. When students finish a self-selected reading book, they fill out a short "reader's response" form or record the book in a reading log.

- *Writing:* The writing component of the Four Blocks Framework consists of writing workshops lasting thirty-five to forty-five minutes. The writing workshop begins with a ten-minute mini-lesson during which the teacher reviews the steps of the writing process -- prewriting, drafting, writing, editing, publishing -- and works collaboratively with the class to focus on one aspect of one step of the process. After the mini-lesson, students return to their seats to work independently for fifteen to twenty-five minutes on their own writing. During this independent writing time students work on their own level and on whichever step of the writing process they are currently on, while the teacher circulates around the room and confers with individual students about their progress. The writing workshop concludes with a ten-minute block where students share some of their writing.

- *Working with Words:* During the word block, students work to increase their phonemic awareness and add to their cache of high-frequency words. The word wall, a large alphabetical chart of high-frequency sight words, is an important part of the Four Blocks words component. Three to ten words are added to the word wall each week and these words become part of the students' daily studies. During this block students also practice decoding skills and experiment with the rules of spelling.

Practical: Visit a classroom for young children and note the print available inthe classroom. Make a record of each type of print and analyzewhether it in term of its appropriateness for children.Observe a classroom when the teacher is carrying out a languageactivity with children. Analyze the teacher's approach with respect tovarious theoretical perspectives you have read about in the course.

Unit 8. Assessment and Evaluation

Young children have, in varying degrees, developmental limitations on several important (and often unrecognized) dimensions. We know from research that learning is a process of building new understandings on the foundation of existing understandings. Learning will be most effective, therefore, when the child's preconceptions are engaged. This has direct implications for teaching and for the development of curricula. It is essential for teachers to ascertain the nature of thinking and the extent of learning for each child in order to make good decisions about what concepts, materials, and learning experiences will support the child's further growth. Perhaps the most significant change to take place in early childhood assessment in recent years concerns the linking of assessment and instruction.

Performance Assessment: This takes a somewhat different approach to the assessment of competence. It is best understood in the context of learning about children's knowledge, skills, and accomplishments through observing, recording, and evaluating their performance or work. Many feel that performance assessments lessen the likelihood of invidious comparisons between children, since each is evaluated according to how his or her specific levels of performance conform to the aims of the curriculum, rather than on how closely the performance conforms to the average performance of a normative group. In addition, they are not typically designed to sort and categorize children.

Teachers can learn to observe and document children's skills, knowledge, and accomplishments as they participate in classroom activities and routines, interact with peers, and work with educational materials. Curriculum-embedded forms of assessment, for example, are contextualized methods that allow children opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge or skills through active engagement in classroom activities.

Some performance assessments can be described as "authentic assessment" when they avoid "on-demand" tasks and focus instead on the assessment of concrete, observable behaviors on real (or realistic) tasks that are part of children's ordinary classroom experiences. To the epistemological question "What is knowing?" performance assessment answers that the evidence of knowing is in the doing (Meisels et al., 1995). Hence, authentic performance assessments thrive on context and on the evidence acquired from natural settings.

With this focus on the evidence of knowing as represented in concrete behaviors or products, competence is not assessed on the basis of a single performance. Performance assessments require multiple sources of information and multiple observations of the same or related phenomena before conclusions can be drawn. They rely on extensive sampling of behavior in order to derive meaningful conclusions about individual children. A variety of documentation methods (e.g., a portfolio, a set of systematic checklists) can be brought into the assessment system. Over time and in the context of numerous performances, teachers observe "the patterns of success and failure and the reasons behind them" (Wihggins, 1998:705). These patterns constitute the evidence on which the assessment is based.

A significant virtue of performance assessments is that they permit children to demonstrate different approaches to performance. Different children may have highly comparable skills, but

they may demonstrate these skills in very different ways. Many also believe that a classroom emphasis on hands-on performance can enhance children's motivation and offer a more informative way of engaging families in their children's intervention progress.There are several characteristics common to performance assessment that make the process relevant for preschool children. They can encourage systematic processes of:

– documenting children's daily activities to show their initiative and creativity,   providing an integrated means for evaluating the quality of children's performance and behavior,
– reflecting on an individualized approach to pedagogy,
– evaluating those elements of learning and development that most conventional assessments do not capture very well,
– utilizing the information acquired in the teaching process to further elaborate the evaluative picture of the child that is emerging from the assessment, and
– shifting the teacher's attention and activity away from the typical content of test taking and onto the learning of the child and the environment in which instruction is taking place.

Traditional norm-referenced ability and achievement tests provide a summative statement about the test taker. An important point to be made about all three of the approaches to the assessment of competence discussed here, including performance assessment, is that they are formative: they provide information that can be used both to change the process of intervention and to keep track of children's progress and accomplishments. Information about the child and the setting that is gathered on a structured but continuing basis is then used to inform the intervention-instructional process. Because the emphasis is on continuous assessment, they can be used to monitor a child's progress frequently, rather than summarizing that progress on annual or semiannual occasions. But performance assessments, like all of the assessments, will only be as strong as the theory on which they are based. Assessment involves theorizing—having informed ideas about the processes of learning and developing hypotheses about a child's strengths and deficits on the basis of assessment information.

Instructional Assessment and Pedagogy: When pedagogy is defined as an interactional construct that reflects a joint focus on the child's status and the characteristics of the educational setting—two conditions are critical for the assessment of learning (see Meisels, 1999). First, there must be sustained opportunities for the interactions between teacher and child to occur, and, second, these interactions must occur over time, rather than on a single occasion. This view does not hold that one can round up all of the kindergarten children in a community on a given day and test them to determine what they know and can do. Rather, it suggests that learning can be assessed only over time and in context. Several methods exist today that can provide the type of assessment that occurs over time and in interaction. They contain not only a joint focus on the child's status and the characteristics of the child's educational setting, but they also encourage individual planning, programming, and evaluation. The Work Sampling System, designed for preschool-grade 5 (Meisels et al., 1994; Meisels, 1996b), is one example of an assessment system designed to achieve these goals. The three types of instructional assessment described aboveare not adopted easily or without expense. They require extensive professional development for teachers; changes in orientation regarding testing, grading, and student classification by educational policy makers; and alteration in expectations by parents and the community. Such changes entail financial burdens, centralized coordination and program

evaluation, and long-term commitment from teachers, parents, and the community—all of which are potential obstacles to implementation.

Work Sampling System: This is a performance assessment designed for children from preschool through grade 5. This approach relies on developmental guidelines and checklists, portfolios, and summary reports. It is based on using teachers' perceptions of their students in actual classroom situations while simultaneously informing, expanding, and structuring those perceptions. It involves students and parents in the learning and assessment process, instead of relying on measures that are external to the community, classroom, and family context, and it makes possible a systematic documentation of what children are learning and how teachers are teaching. The Work Sampling System draws attention to what the child brings to the learning situation and what the learning situation brings to the child. As active constructors of knowledge, children should be expected to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and interpret facts and ideas. This approach to performance assessment allows teachers the opportunity to learn about these processes by documenting children's interactions with materials, adults, and peers in the classroom environment and using this documentation to evaluate children's achievements and plan future educational interventions.

Child Observation Record: Developed by High/Scope, this assessment provides a means of systematically observing children's activities in the ongoing context of their classroom experiences, including prolonged activity and across time periods (High/Scope Research Foundation, 1992). The focus of the observations is on "important developmental experiences that should happen in all developmentally appropriate early childhood programs" and on "existing strengths and weaknesses rather than skills that have not yet emerged." Six broad areas are assessed: initiative, social relations, creative representation, music and movement, language and literacy, and logic and mathematics. The system is comprehensive, providing behaviors to observe, a systematic way to collect anecdotal remarks, and a means to draw conclusions about the children's performance in order to plan instruction.

Project Construct: This is a process-oriented curriculum and assessment framework for working with children ages three through seven" (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1992:3). It is based on constructivist theory and includes curriculum and assessment guidelines organized into four interrelated domains: sociomoral, cognitive, representational, and physical development. The project design provides a variety of resources for educators and parents, including curriculum materials, assessment instruments, and training and professional development opportunities. The Project Construct Assessment System is an integrated set of evaluation tools aligned with the Project Construct curriculum goals for children. Two components make up the assessment system—the Formative Assessment Program and the Inventory. Both parts utilize multiple sources of information that are primarily collected by teachers over extended periods of time.

Unit 9. Introducing English in the Early Years

Multilingualism in India is widely known and acknowledged. This multilingualism is a result of 1652 languages spoken in the country (Census, 1961) and 22 languages in the VIII Schedule (Constitution of India, 2003). It is important to take note of the recommendations of the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework (2013) before we discuss the introduction of English.

The medium of interaction in the ECCE centre should be home language or mother tongue. However, there may be more than one language as mother tongue, which may pose problems for children coming from different language backgrounds and dialects. It is therefore important to allow as many languages as are in the classroom to be used for expression. We know that language is closely linked to child's identity and emotional security. Therefore, it is important to encourage different languages for expression by children in the ECCE centres.

Research is now establishing that children can learn many languages in the first six years. Therefore, while promoting mother tongue, there is also merit in utilizing ECCE as an opportunity to provide exposure to school language, so that children enter school better prepared. However, this should be done in a phased manner. Children should be encouraged to be proficient in their mother tongue/ home language first and then the formal school language (regional language or English) should be introduced (pages 13-14)

Thus, recommendations for use of the child's mother tongue/first language have been clearly laid out. English over the past 60 years has gained the status of power, employability, and social mobility. It is the medium of instruction in our higher education where research and knowledge production happens and has become a necessity to get into the educational system seamlessly. This need has percolated down to schools and even to pre-schools. It can be gauged by the growing demand for 'English-medium' pre-schools for very young children, even in remote parts of India. The curriculum and practices most of the times in these preschools go in contradiction of the developmental needs of children. Teachers lack training in second language pedagogy; moreover, many of them lack proficiency in English language themselves which is a prerequisite for a teacher to teach any language. In most cases children's first exposure to English, even as a medium of instruction, is with the alphabet and script, rather than with the spoken language. As a result of the unfamiliarity with the language of the text, children may learn to decode letters and words but find vocabulary and comprehension challenging. There is thus, no differentiated pedagogy for first, second and third languages in our schools, and these are all treated using the same approach.

Unit -1 Additional Reference Material

Development of Oral language in the early years

Structure:

- The rule governed nature of language – exploration of rules through examples of at least two languages.
- Children's construction knowledge about language and recognition of its rules governed nature through immersion :- over – generation of rules as an indicatsor of development and children's active role in construction of their language ;examples of over generation of rules from Hindi or other Indian languages.
- Principles and Forms and functions of language – including language as a medium for thinking and learning
- Transition from home language to school language.

Principles and Forms and functions of language – including language as a medium for thinking and learning

Language is more than a complex, highly effective medium for sharing information. Language is a communication system and entire way of life depends on its use. Language enables to share experiences, within and across generations. Members of each new generation learn from their elders. Once humans learn their first language, it becomes inextricably interwoven with the patterns and contents of their thoughts. Children gain language as a tool for thinking. 'Children solve practical problems with the help of their speech, as well as with their eyes and hands' (Vygotksy). It is a cognitive advantage because individual experiences, realisations and solutions to problems can be shared much more explicitly trough language The fusing of language with thought provides children with the means for a unique kind of mental development and language makes to think.

Forms of language:

Language is the form of oral/verbal and Non verbal /written.

Language is a system of arbitrary and consists of sounds, structure and vocabulary.

The system of language functions through sounds, words and structures. These are integrated and form the language.

The relationship between the word and the object for which it is spoken is essential. Different words can be used for one object in different languages, hence language is arbitrary.

Symbols of language are vocal and basically systems of symbols and speech.

Symbols can be images, sounds, smells and many other.., these are generated internally.

Symbols of language are its words for better functioning of language. It is essential that both the speaker and listener know and use the words.

Words are manifestation of symbols.

Language is constantly changing and developing according to the needs of the speaker. New words are absorbed in the language from time to time.

Each word has a definite sound and definite meaning. For communication of ideas it is essential to attach a meaning to its sound. Any person can communicate their thoughts only when they can use the language through signs, symbols , words and sentences.

The expressive power of symbols is associated with any thing. These associations may be used to define semantics of symbols

Language is a skill and learnt. It is a form of behaviour

A new born child does not know any language except crying,but they express their ideas through sounds and oral expressions. The child listens to elders and others spoken at home around him /her and learns language by imitation and practice.

Writing is another form of geographical representation of speech.

Child learns language by listening, speaking, reading and writing .Listening and speaking are receptive skills and speaking and writing are the productive skills.

Functions of language:

There are three important functions of language.

- **Informative**:

It is to communicate information. It is used to describe an event, situation, information about anything .

Information passes through communication. Information of thoughts from one person to another and one generation to another is communicated through oral or written language.

- **Expressive**:

It is a communicative process carried out through verbal or non verbal ie spoken or written. It is to express feelings and emotions or attitudes and evokes similar/ certain feelings in others. It reports feelings or attitudes of speaker or writer and correct communication involves correct use of language. Through non verbal it is symbolic expression.

- **Directive**: language directs to action. It commonly used for commands and requests
  This is used directly and also indirectly by communicating others to put into action.

As per Vygotsky - language serves two functions:

- **Language serves as a Psychological tool**

As a psychological tool, language is not just as a classification system for organising our thoughts, but also for reasoning, planning, reviewing. This 'psychological tool' provides new or imitative ways, in the form of sentences, propositions, versions.

- **Language serves as a Cultural tool.**

As a cultural tool it involves in a two-way process of constant change. 'Culture' is the joint knowledge available to members of social groups which provides the basis for co-ordinated social activity. Gaining access to the culture of society is a formative influence on the ways of thinking. Each day interactions between people bring the society alive and can reshape the culture of the society by getting involved in it. Language is used not only as a means of sharing information in society, but also as a way of making things happen – by influencing the actions of others. Thus each language is a product of a particular society and culture. It is transmitted by

learning It has meaning only in a particular culture and society and learning are   based on culture.

Summary

Language is a complex System with sub systems of sounds (phonology), the system of words morphology, the system of structure, (syntax) and the system of meaning (semantics). All these subsystems form integral system working in coordination with one another.   Language is with standards and functions by rules and conventions. It is through language makes child /human to think, feel, judge and express. Language is the major vehicle of cultural transformation   through communication of thoughts.

Check your progress:

1. Language is the system of

....

....

What are the forms of language and how do child express their thoughts?

....

....

Unit 3 Additional Reference Material

These also discussed unit 6 and 7

Drawing and scribbling, labelling, picture reading , print awareness, pretend reading and invented spellings

The above activities are planned for children in the preschool as prereading and prewriting activities before they start reading and writing.

The child start scribbling even from the age two years. onwards start drawing lines with any writing instrument on the floor or paper even from the stage of holding a pencil with their four fingers together. Slowly when the child starts growing scribbling takes shape of drawing lines straight , horijontal slant ect and formin in to differen shapes and making sence of any concept through drawing.

"Drawing is superior to activities such as reading or writing because it forces the person to process information in multiple ways: visually, kinesthetically, and semantically. It is a pictorial representationof a concept.

- listening to a lecture or viewing an image, activities in which child passively absorb information, drawing is active activity. It makes children to grabble with what they're learning and reconstruct it in a way that makes sense to them.
- It is a creative activity –each child represents by drawing in his own way.

- When a child draws a concept, they "must elaborate on its meaning and semantic features, engage in the actual hand movements needed for drawing (motor action), and visually inspect their created picture (pictorial processing).," the kinaesthetic memory of our hand drawing the image, and the semantic memory.

:

- In the classroom ,when the child is instructed to draw a concept his about it mind body and hands work together. The child has to think about the concept visualise, remember or recollectabout it and dra in his own way.

- Children can be asked to represent through draing.to make posters that reinforce learning, through maps, charts, or diagrams

- In their notebooks one side pagecan be used for written notes, the other for drawings, diagrams, and charts.

- students collect, analyse, and present data in visual form can deepen their understanding of a topic..

- Bookmaking:Blending academics and art, students to visually represent topics in subjects ranging from science to English language arts. Students can also create comics books to tell stories or describe events.

Using Multilingualism is the classroom as a source – challenges and possibilities.

Many children come from different cultures and different ethnic groups and from different back grounds Many children are thus, compelled own from early childhood years and are forced to leave behind their own culture and home language when they enter the preschool / school .They are compelled to learn second language and then third language also.

It is the challenge for the teacher to coordinate with all these children from different linguistic backgrounds. Hence the teacher in the classroom need to use bilingualism and even multilingualism in the classroom to bring child and make children learn the common language, regional and school languages.

When a child's home language and culture is obliterated in the classroom space, when they are not provided with opportunities to engage in meaningful activities and when they are constantly reminded of their inability to meet the expectations of the teacher, they are most likely to internalize rejection and remain a spectator of the 'grand' mission of education. With multilingualism at the grass root level, a child's knowledge of more than one language also constitutes his/ her own identity (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2004). Identity formation takes place in children at a young age quite rapidly.

Multilingualsm is the use of more than one language either by an individual speaker or by a group of speakers

Given the nature of multilingualism children have to negotiate between home and school language right from the time they enter preschool or school, often without much support. They learn in either regional/ dominant language which is either their second language or third language. Pedagogy in early years is rarely informed by language development.

Children manage to negotiate a new language if they have opportunity to hear and express themselves with peers or significant adults. If children are forced to learn a language that is a part of the textbook and school culture without any support leads to children tend to lack confidence in using

the language. Children either cannot communicate with larger community or lose interest in studies and drop out. Hence it is the teacher ho play n important role in making possibities to learn language by using multilingualism

Challenges for the teacher in using multilingualism in the class room

- The teacher in the classroom need to know the different cultural and linguistic back grounds of children and understand the different personalities of children nd about families.
- The should convey to the family that their children would be comfortable in the clarrroom as the teacher uses multilingualism in the classroom.
- The teacher need to use bilingualism in the classroom taking into consideration of the different linguistic backgrounds.
- Addressing and using languages differently and constructively as per need of the children.
- Talk to each child to make them understand and participate conveniently.
- Techer should be flexible in communicating by using multiple languages.
- Teacher should make efforts in preparation and using teaching learning materials to address

  address the linguistic complexities in the classroom so that all children get a level playing

  field on early literacy and learning.
- Teacher need to use toys and other play material in the class room and make children talk about in their language and make other children to repeat in their language.
- The teacher make use of flashcards / posters and display material by using bilingual language.
- The teacher make children sing rhymes and tell stories in their mother longue and then repeat using the school language and refer to their mother tongue or regional languages.

Summary

The regional or standard language can either motivate or marginalise children, particularly in early literacy and learning activities, depending on their respective language contexts.
Challenges of implementing mother tongue/first language instruction, it is critical to also consider the benefits of maintaining bilingualism./multilingualism. They show greater number of independent cognitive strategies at their disposal and exhibit greater flexibility in the use of these strategies to solve problems. They perform better especially in tasks that call for selective attention that includes inhibition, monitoring, and switch of focus of attention literacy skills gained in one language can transfer to another language.

Check your progress

How teacher do facilitates understanding and develop language among children using Multilingualism.

UNIT 6 - Creating a Language Learning Environment: Principles and Practices

6.1 Introduction

Children learn speech and language by listening; watching, babbling, exploring, copying, responding, interacting and playing with others.They learn language at a phenomenal rate in their early years. There is no right way for a child to learn or a designated time for them to begin to speak- children reach speech and language developmental milestones in different ways. For early childhood educators, the ability to speak and understand a child's tongue is a skill often undervalued by non educators. This skill is especially important for educators who are caring for children with different home languages from their own.

Educators who share a child's language attempts with parents/guardians can often ease a young child's frustration as the adults in their life create a shared context. Understanding and supporting speech and language development is central to what early childhood educators do as part of creating a language rich learning environment.

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6.2 Objectives

- Examine and understand the close relationship between oral language and early literacy.
- Understand the theoretical perspectives to the development of language and literacy in young learners and develop a critical understanding of multiple approaches to early literacy.
- Implement pedagogic to support and nurture the developing language and literacy of young learners in classrooms. Be sensitive towards cultural, linguistic socio-economic diversity in the classroom.

- Develop their professional identities as teachers as educators for the early years

6.3: Child ascreator and constructor of meaning:Primacy of children's experiences and perspectives in classroom literacy practices :

Introduction :

It is important to provide a variety of experiences to support children's communication and language skills. This unit describes how you can create language- and communication-rich environments that engage children in meaningful experiences that promote development.

Learning to talk is one of the conspicuous and important achievements of early childhood. Infants quickly learn to talk and communicate . In a matter of few months , toddlers without any specific teaching, move from hesitant single words like da-da, (come), nee for water, kava for want etc, to fluent sentences like I want biscuits, I want that toy to play etc., and from a small vocabulary to one that is growing by six new words per day. Language acquisition means new opportunities for social understanding, learning about the world and for sharing experiences, pleasures and needs. Most of the children begin speaking during their second year of age and are likely to know at least 50 words combining them in short phrases. If vocabulary reaches 200 words , the rate of word learning increases dramatically and grammatical function words suchas articles and prepositions begin to appear with some consistency. During the preschool years, sentence patterns become increasingly complex and vocabulary expands which includes terms that express notions of size, location quantity and time. Between 4years to six years of age, most of the children acquired basic grammar of the sentence. It is at this stage that children learn to use language more efficiently and effectively.They learn to be more descriptive, narrative and learn to create, maintain larger language units such as conversation, narrating stories or an incident.Although there are individual differences in the rate of developmentthe sequence in which various forms appear is highly predictable both within and across stages.

How does Nature and Nurture help in language development?

Many research studies have proved the interactive nature of the language development. Language acquisition , however involves cognitive processes like perception that works in a certain way and with finite attention and memory capacities. These cognitive processes are

central in the learning of language.Also children's prior experiences with the material and social world provides an early bases for interpreting the language they hear. They will also make use of language cues thereafter. It is clear that language skills reflect knowledge and capabilities in every domain and should not be looked upon as separate entity.

When children have a firm bond with others, they feel secure and motivated to communicate with them. This unit deals with different strategies to encourage language development under six principles of language development which are the stem and branch of speech.Language learning requires sensitive and responsive conversations with childrenwhere language input is tailored to the interest and timing of child's attention.

Principle 1 : Children learn the words they Hear Most

Frequency matters; children learn what they hear most.Recent research has confirmed that one factor that helps children learn language which is connected to school success is the number of words children hear on a regular basis.Hence , parents and elders at   home need to talk more with and around young children. Children need to hear the common words that we use every day. Expand on what they are saying by adding details to the conversation. One can talk about what they are doing. Children listen, compare, recall and meaning- making by putting the pieces together.

Principle 2 :Children learn words for things and events that interest them :

The children's interest plays an essential role in any type of learning and language development is no exception either.Bloom in 1993 argued that children are likely to learn words for things they find interesting. According to her ," Language learning is enhanced when the words a child hears bear upon and are pertinent to the objects of engagement, interest and feelings."Some theorists suggest that children have access to a number of co-occurring cues for word learning but hone in on cues that they are particularly drawn to at different developmental time points. Research suggests that those parents who follow their child's interest to an object creating joint attention situation are more likely to learn the label for that object than when parents redirect their children's attention to another referent. They will give more attention to the things they care about such as food they like, people they know and the toys they play with. In other words ,this principle emphasizes the self- centred aspect of young children.This process scaffolds children's

challenges in linking linguistic symbols to their referents. Although single language and bi-lingual children should respond to pragmatic cues, bi-lingual children possess heightened sensitivity to social and pragmatic cues. Ex :3- 4 year bi-lingual children were more specific at using gestures and gaze directions to locate a hidden object in comparison to mono-lingual children.

Principle 3 : Principle Interactive and Responsive Rather Than Passive Contexts Promote Language Learning:

Research supports the fact that children need real- life exchanges with real people. Even though children are exposed to language through television or computer, they do not learn much as it is not interactive, not personal like an exchange of ideas, emotions and information with another individual. When we say social interaction matters, it means that two- way communication(back and forth) is considered. Interactions that involve periods of joint focus , positive affect, sensitivity, co-operation and acceptance provide children with the scaffolding necessary to facilitate language acquisition. Thus infants and young children learn language in contexts which their vocalizations , gestures, and facial expressions evoke responses from the people around them. Ex : during play time, at meal times , bedtime story telling are all excellent opportunities for family members and teachers to have conversation with children. Though the adult may be conversing in complex sentences , the child converses in gestures or grunts but it is learning opportunity for the child not to be missed out.

Principle 4 : Children learn words best in meaningful contexts :

Children need different strategies to introduce new words and engaging in meaningful contexts through related activities are very much needed. The very young children remember the things happened in immediate moment and things that are happening are more interesting and accessible to them than things happened in the past or recalling some of the memories. If teachers and family members could connect their words to playful experiences such as dramatic play/ playing in a park, children will be more attuned to learning the words that go with those experiences. This is why teachers should plan and use rich vocabulary to accompany learning experiences for children and add rich vocabulary into ordinary play experiences that children create for themselves.Appreciating and praising children using words such as "masterpiece",

construct, architect , etc such words pertaining to building activities of block area will encourage new thoughts and new language. Meaningful connections between words are also fostered when thematic play is used as prop for language development. Ex children engaged in vehicles theme likely to possess larger vocabulary pertaining to the theme- vehicles on road, on air, on water, tracks , two wheelers three wheelers four wheelers vehicles during past- bullock cart, horse cart etc., sounds that they make, uses, etc, fast and slow vehicles., passengers etc. Singing rhymes, telling stories, pretend play of bus, train, aeroplane., are more likely to have larger receptive vocabulary. Research studies show that teaching vocabulary in integrated and meaningful contexts enriches children's background knowledge and hence their mental lexicons. Hence teachers and parents should encourage guided play environment to stimulate their curiosity and acquisition of language.). In guided play contexts, children's interests serve as the foundation for learning. Educators structure an environment around a general curricular goal by encouraging children's natural curiosity, exploration, and play with learning-oriented objects or materials (Fein &Rivkin, 1986; Fisher et al., 2011; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009; Marcon, 2002; Weisberg et al., 2013). Conversations between adults and children in a playful context build on children's interests and offer them new lexical concepts that are more likely to be retained than unbidden verbal explanations (e.g., Golinkoff, 1986). Meaningful learning environments and instructional methods that are tailored to the individual needs of English as second language children. Should be beneficial in developing their second language.

Principle5 :Children Need to Hear Diverse Examples of Words and Language Structures :

 Exposing children to proper grammar and rich vocabulary will help them learn literacy through a natural process. They make errors in grammar as they are learning to use language to communicate as a first step. Ex :me want it, etc., However children gradually pickup correct language if they habitually hear correct language, they will absorb the rules of language and learn to correct their own errors. This requires family members and teachers to monitor their own speech because they are the role models from which children learn.A longitudinal study on teacher child conversations reported that rich language input during free play and group book reading at age four correlated positively with children's literacy skills at the end of kindergarten and fourth grade. Diverse inputs appears to have benefits at the phonological , semantic syntactic and literacy level of languages 1 and 2. The implication for practice is exposure to

various words in variety of contexts is beneficial for all children – mono and bi-lingual and English language learners.

Principle 6: Vocabulary Grammatical Development Are Reciprocal Processes

One way to foster this reciprocal development is to introduce new words in various syntactic frames. For example, listen-and-do tasks appear to be effective in promoting beginner ESL children's vocabulary and grammar knowledge (Shintani, 2012). In listen-and-do tasks, learners need to first listen to commands and then perform actions to show that they have understood the commands. The study by Shintani (2012) found that children who were engaged in listen-and-do tasks improved their receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge and their understanding of plural and singular forms compared to the control group. Instructional methods that teach vocabulary as an independent list of words devoid of semantic or syntactic context may not be effective in enhancing language development. The presentation of new words in different syntactic contexts will facilitate language development both in mono and bi-lingual children.Children learn new words by using syntactic structures of a sentence and this mechanism is called bootstrapping by many researchers. Many research studies proved that vocabulary and grammar develop simultaneously in early years.

Children are highly sensitive to emotional states and pay close attention when we express passion or excitement. Intense reactions inhibit their ability to concentrate and learn. Hence adults need to keep the emotional atmosphere positive and respectful. A calm firm approach will help children feel safe enough to access new language skills. In other words a positive healthy atmosphere is what required for the children to acquire language skills.

6.1.3 Summary:

Equipped with a set of developmentally appropriate, evidenced-based principles derived from the science of learning, we can promote the academic trajectory of ESL children. Many research based evidences in the field of language development show that there may be sufficient empirical evidence to offer a toolbox of six principles to promote children's language development and academic success. The development of language is one of the child's most impressive accomplishments. The root of language development in all children is Responsive interaction. It is here that the adults be it parents ,caretakers , teachers come into developmental

process. Their role is to provide rich experiences for listening to the language in an interactive environment in a meaningful context .

6.1.4 : Unit end questions :

Q 1) What is the role of the child in learning a language?

Q2) What are the six principles of language development in young children? What are the different language experiences you provide to the child based on the above principles of language development ?

Q3) The child picks up language in an interactive environment. Justify with examples.

6.2 : Strengthening oral language development :

Introduction :

Oral language is the first most important , most frequently used structured medium of communication. It is the primary means through which each individual child will be able to structure, evaluate describe and control his/her experiences.

Research has shown that oral language –the foundations of which are developed by age four has profound impact on child's preparedness for kindergarten and on success throughout their academic career.

Most significantly, oral language is the primary mediator of culture , the way in which children locate themselves in the world, and define themselves with it and within it. At the basic level, oral language is about communicating with other people which involves process of utilizing thinking, knowledge and skills in order to speak and listen effectively. Oral language is the child's first medium of communication. It is the primary means through which each individual child will be enabled to structure, to evaluate, to describe and to control his/her experience. At its most basic level, oral language is about communicating with other people. As such, it is central to the lives of all people. Oral language permeates every facet of the primary school curriculum. The development of oral language should be given utmost importance as great as that of reading and writing, at every level, in the curriculum.   As they grow, children learn aspects of

five domains of language as well as subtle high- level conversation skills.These domains are Phonology, syntax ,semantics, morphology and pragmatics. The same has been dealt in the previous units and this unit focuses on strengthening on five domains of oral language development . The role of adult and the teacher in providing opportunities by way of intentional play activities foster oral language development in children by focusing on the below five components of oral language.
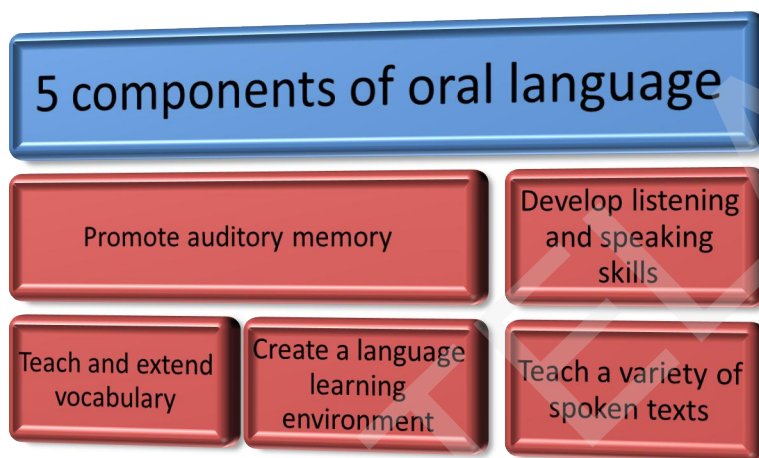
i) Develop listening and speaking skills:

The early years are a period in which young children are using language to learn not only about the world but also how language can be used to serve many purposes. This knowledge is referred to as pragmatic knowledge. One of the important components of pragmatic knowledge is conversational skills. Children develop conversation skills influences how well they interact with others. Conversing with children is not the only way to increase vocabulary. Children pickup this ability naturally to a certain extent, parents and teachers play a vital role in assisting them to be good conversationalists. There are different strategies to increase their vocabulary apart from conversation.Strategies teachers use while reading with and to children can also build their word banks. Asking open-ended questions helps teachers assess children's comprehension but also helps them learn more vocabulary words. Open-ended questions should lead to think and answer by giving ample time to formulate answers. Attentive body language, expanding children's responses, asking clarifying questions

and using reflective listening techniques are ways to help children participate in conversation. It is a two-way communication process. Although children's oral or expressive language gets emphasized, receptive language or listening is equally important. It is the through listening/hearing, information is interpreted.

> "Listening is arguably the most important skill used for obtaining comprehensible input in one's first language and in any subsequent languages. It is a pervasive communicative event. We listen considerably more than we read, write or speak." (LeLoup and Pontero, 2007)

In order to develop children as good listeners, teachers can do to increase children's listening and speaking skills as follows:

- ✓ Get down to their eye level when children are speaking
- ✓ Treat children as if they are skilled at conversation. Teacher has to pay full attention and focus on what they say, by asking open-ended questions to follow up what they share.
- ✓ Speak to all children be it language delay or English language learners.
- ✓ Let children know that their ideas and opinions are being valued. Ask questions about things which you do not know.
- ✓ Help children listen to one another, when adults value listening to children and to each other, children notice this, also adults must give children scope intentionally to listen to each other.
- ✓ Time limit should be given for children by limiting group time and small group discussions.
- ✓ Children's home language should be valued in the class including sign language for the hearing impaired and for English language learners.
- ✓ Encourage children to listen and to ask questions by "Show and Ask" In order to teach listening skills in children, teachers need to
- ✓ Explicitly model how to be good listeners.

- ✓ Schedule quiet, listening opportunities as part of school day.Give simple instructions and directions during all learning activities
- ✓ Ask relevant questions.
- ✓ Read stories aloud and encourage them to re-tell story in sequence
- ✓ Use dictation drills
- ✓ Play games
- ✓ Use taped stories and questions
- ✓ Listen to songs, poetry and music
- ✓ Use instructional exercises, radio programs

Developing speaking skills:

Teachers need to

- ✓ Explicitly model effective speaking in a formal and informal manner
- ✓ Provide opportunities for children to engage in conversational-style speaking. Ex: Scenario cards, shop-area etc.
- ✓ Role play
- ✓ Activities for the whole class to read aloud
- ✓ Teach the rules that govern social interaction
- ✓ Charts to capture mannerisms associated with effective speaking (Non-verbal behaviour)

Activities:

Activities like "Acting out" people I talk to, listen to, telephone game, feely bag etc. Such games encourage listening and speaking skills in children.

ii) **Teach a variety of spoken texts**

There are a variety of oral language texts that teachers can use to address the functions of language that is required in social and academic contexts.

- Oral reports – TV/Radio

- Story-telling and anecdotes
- Small group work
- Giving instructions/procedures
- Conversations
- Questioning and interviews
- Arguments/formal/informal debates

Activities for oral reports:

TV/Radio reports: Teacher can play segments of a range of TV or Radio reports such as news, weather etc. This provides opportunities for children to listen and analyze who, when, what, why?

Storytelling and Anecdotes

Telling stories, recalling events and relating personal anecdotes have been preserved and passed through many cultures and societies. Storytelling is a vital part of everyday conversation and should be an important feature in classrooms too. Teachers can extend storytelling skills into performance opportunities such as play, dramatization etc. using different properties.

Model good storytelling, creating character profiles with variety of materials (hat, masks, pictures, shoes etc. Circle stories, story games, sound stories, reader's theatre puppetry, drama etc. are some of the activities for good listening/speaking skills in children.

Partner and small group work: It provides and authentic learning context with rules that are best established as a class for effective group work.

One group work rules:

- We listen to one another
- We dont all talk at sametime
- We share ideas
- We help each other out

Classroom conversation are dialogues that occur between teachers and children used to crate, negotiate or deepen the understanding of topic.Questioning encourages higher order thinking and forms the basis of enquiry. Good questioning enhances understanding, explain clarify, probe, make connections, identify problems and issues. Feely bag, taped/radio segments, who am I? are few games that encourage thinking in children. Arguments and formal/informal debates provides opportunities for practice in giving, justifying opinions.

Giving instructions/ procedure: Involve communicating a series of steps in order to accomplish and end. Ex: put, go, add, turn, take etc.

Barrier games – partnering, matching pairs, mapping, spot the differences etc are few examples.

iii)   Creating a language learning environment

A language learning environment can be created by focusing on three key elements:

Element	Definition
The physical environment	By enriching the physical environment of the classroom, multiple opportunities for engaging oral interaction and development will exist. Suggestions for a rich physical environment are listed below.

Class room culture	By enriching the physical environment of the classroom, we create multiple opportunities for engaging oral interaction and development. Suggestions for creating classroom culture that facilitates oral instructions are listed below.
Opportunities for communication	Communication will happen all the time in the classroom. By taking advantage of certain communication opportunities, students can be exposed to multiple oral language contexts and uses. Suggestions for valuable opportunities for communication that can be harnessed are listed below.

Ways of developing the physical environment:

- Table or display board to display objects of personal interest/topic related resources
- Dress-up boxes as this allows pupils to engage in spontaneous role play, to re-tell experiences, and experiment with new ideas and vocabulary
- Collection of puppets to encourage retelling favourite stories.
- Creative area (Toys, dress-up clothes, creating equipment)
- Rug area for instruction and whole group activities.
- Library for children's books. Perhaps, include a special place for books the children have created so they can be re-read.
- Listening corner with CD player, CDs and headphones, this provides another opportunity for pupils to listen to a variety of audio recordings
- Telephones and message pads to practice conversational and inquiring skills

Ways of developing the Class room culture

- Create a class room culture of "have a go"

- Be sensitive to cultural differences

- Emphasize enjoyment for all

- Value social talk and the use of language used at home

- Seize the moment if something unusual in the school happens or if a child brings something to the school

- Encourage all attempts by the children at both speaking and listening.

- Teach pupils to share classroom responsibilities. Example: Change the calendar, setup writing table, organize the library.

- Maintain an emphasis on enjoyment.

- Provide opportunities for the children to reflect and review their speaking and/or listening

- Explicitly teach students to take turns in groups

- Communicate high expectations

- Motivate pupils to speak to all members of the class.

Ways of developing opportunities for discussion

- Model good listening to the children

- Model using specific language to the children. Example, retelling stories

- Provide role play opportunities to experiment with language

- Teach or display nursery rhymes, poems, songs, chants, raps so that children can hear and practice the structure and sounds

- Read aloud to the children everyday

- Provide puppets, felt boards, toys to retell favourite stories.

- Read a variety of text types to the children

- Invite guests to the classroom

- Model and allow the children to purposefully practice the language associated with group work and social interaction.

- Teach pupils to resolve conflicts through language. Example – "The next time you should say", "I would like to play with that ball when you have finished, please"

- Read or recite poetry to the class each day

iv)   Teach and Extend Vocabulary and Conceptual knowledge

Vocabulary is the term used to describe the collection of words in a given language used and understood in speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is important for children to develop knowledge of word meanings from an early age and to this end, they need to be actively engaged in vocabulary development.

When teaching vocabulary, we need to plan for –

- Teaching individual wordsby teaching synonyms, antonyms, root words, suffixes etc. Direct word-meaning teaching is an effective way to facilitate children's vocabulary development
- Teaching word learning strategiessuch as words in context, definitions, word maps
- Fostering an awareness and love of words and language such as multiple meanings, word games, word of the week
- Providing varied experiences for using wordsthrough reading, writing and oral language. Children need to be exposed to new vocabulary to acquire word knowledge and exposure in different contexts, supports their acquisition of nuanced meanings.

Activities to support vocabulary development

Chain game

Chain game is the game given to the gradual expansion of the sentence. An example of how a chain writing activity is structured is outlined here.

1. Select a word related to the theme you are developing. Example – spiders
2. Ask the children to suggest words which describes the spiders. Example:

Suggested words	Theme		
- Hairy - Black - Scary - Sneaky - Horrible - Long legged	Spiders		

3. Then ask what spiders do and add the words to the list. Example:

Suggested words	Theme	Verbs	
• Hairy • Black • Scary • Sneaky • Horrible • Long legged	Spiders	• Climb • Hide • Lurk • Creep • Bite • Sleep	

Semantic mapping:

Semantic Mapping is a strategy for graphically representing concepts. Semantic maps clearly portray the schematic relations that compose a concept. It assumes that there are multiple relations between a concept and the knowledge that is associated with that concept.

v) Promote Auditory Memory:

Auditory Memory involves the ability to assimilate information; presented orally, to process that information, store it and re-call what has been heard. Essentially it involves the task of attending, listening, processing, storing and re-calling.

Children with auditory memory deficiencies will often experience difficulty developing a good understanding of words, or remembering terms and information that has been presented orally, for example, in history and science classes.

How to develop auditory memory skills:

✓ Repeat and use information.
✓ Recite poems, songs, tales, rhymes etc.
✓ Memorize and sequence songs
✓ Retell stories e.g., Fairy tales, myths.
✓ Retell stories using puppets or by illustrating a map.
✓ Recall verbal messages or phone numbers.

- ✓ Play memory games
- ✓ Recount new events
- ✓ Use visual cues and mnemonics.
- ✓ Hide an object and give directions for others to find it.
- ✓ Provide organizational tools to assist memory, such as graphic or visual organizers
- ✓ Explicitly teach pupils to be conscious of remembering important concepts, skills and metacognitive strategies such as the "Think aloud"

The following is a small section of activities adapted from the book "Auditory processing activities" by Jeffries and Jeffries. This book contains a substantial amount of activities that can be used to develop auditory processing with a whole class and individual pupils.

Activity name and Instructions	Activity
Teacher assigns new names to the class. Each pupil receives two names to remember as his/her name. (Example: Mary could be named 1,7.) The pupils listen to each direction and does at it says only if they hear their numbers following their direction.	1. Clap your hands 2. Say the name of your best friend 3. Stand up 4. Touch your nose 5. Say the name of your favorite sweet 6. Walk to the door and back etc.

Summary : Caregivers and teachers are crucial in supporting oral language. Since the social context is so critical, for rich oral language acquisition, parents and teachers need to become aware of their own understandings about how language is organised and what the different aspects of language are. Caregivers in the families and teachers in the class need well honed skills to tune in to the level of linguistic activities to ensure each child's not only academic success but also the ability to flourish in social interactions with peer group, friendship patterns, multi-cultural understandings and team activities. Teachers should employ various strategies to engage and motivate children in rich conversations poems poetry and various games that involve listening, speaking skills, songs, dance etc.for oral language development and at the same time , they are optimising children's cognitive abilities too.

Unit end Questions :

Q1) What is Oral Language? What are the different components of oral language?

Q2) What are auditory and speaking skills? Suggest a few ways how to improve listening and speaking skills.

Q3) Suggest five games and activities for vocabulary development and auditory memory.

Q4) How do you modify your classroom into language rich environment ?

Q5) Plan and recommend few activities for oral language development to be carried out at home by the parents.

6.6 : Print rich environment

6.6.1 : Introduction :

A print rich environment can be defined as classroom where young children are given many different opportunities to interact with many different forms of print. One of the ways to introduce reading and writing among many is by giving them opportunities to view print at home or at school in ways that are meaningful to them.

Why is print rich environment important for preschool children?

Aprint rich environment is important for developing children's language skills because they discover that there is another way to communicate through print. Print rich environment helps to foster skills needed for reading and writing.Children begin to develop cues that help them figure out words they see which lays the foundation for reading.Furthermore, this environment also spurs interest in writing because children love to model what they see. around them and communicate in written form. So if children are in environment that is filled with labels charts , posters and signs, they will be exposed to words, letters , numbers early and make connections between letters and the function they serve.

What kind of print rich environment can be made at home?

Ordinary house-hold routines and activities can be used as learning experiences for children. For example, the mother can label food items that the child eats, while walking on the road, the mother can make the child observes S signs on the stores and other shops, cutting the coupons etc.One can do with any household routine and the parent can also involve children in grocery shopping where the child can be asked to identify the objects by seeing the labellingetc and can also involve in many games and activities.

Remember, when you talk to children always use words in the context of a sentence instead of using just singular word so that children are exposed to sentence structure.

When children begin to recognize words, expand their understanding by putting them in context. For example if a child recognises 'D'in his name David , he has to be explained that 'D' is in David so also in Door, Dog, Doctor etc. The next important thing that parents/childcare providers is to model for kids. Let the kids watch you as you write a letter to someone and let them involve in fix the stamp and sealing it . By this modelling usage of letters , words, numbers which they will be using in future.

Reading aloud is also another important activity to be carried out daily that promotes letter recognition numbers and how they work.

Creating a print- rich environment

1) Using labels The preschool teacher can simply create labels for the things that are familiar to the child in the classroom routine like chair, table, cupboard, dust bin etc. since the words stand alone and are not part of the sentence, they should be written in lowercase.As children interact with the materials , furniture and with eachother in the classroom, they see the printed words often. By labelling the things, strategically next to or an item that the word represents, children will be given greater opportunity to associate the words to objects

2) Displaying names of children :Another important aspect in creating print rich environment is to display the names of each child. Because name is a formal word, the beginning word starts with a capital letter followed by lower case letters.

3)Placing words on bulletin board is another way to build a print rich environment. Titles, names, days of the week, months of the year start with a capital letter followed by lowercase letters.

4)Posters :add to print rich environment.

5)Display at eye level :The teacher has to try placing the words on objects that children use and interact frequently by keeping the words at the eye level of the child. But overloading every item in the classroom is not required. Ex: labelling every chair and table is not necessary.

- ✓ Read Aloud Every Day. ..Demonstrate reading aloud in your daily routine.
- ✓ Let children see how you use reading throughout the day by helping them notice when you read your mail, a shopping list, a TV schedule, preparation instructions on a box of food, school announcements, a newspaper or magazine, etc.
- ✓ Point out and read signs in your neighbourhood or travels (e.g., street signs, store names, billboards, marquees, sides of trucks, etc.).
- ✓ Turn on the closed captioning when viewing TV or videos..
- ✓ use Word Walls. ...
- ✓ Use Anchor Charts. ...
- ✓ Create a Diverse Classroom Library. ...

✓ Put Language in Unexpected Places. ...

✓ Search for Awesome Language While Reading. …

✓ Encourage Awesome Language in Writing. ...

Play with Words.

Create Times For Reading And Writing Together Ask a relative or friend to send your child an e-mail or a letter. Help your child respond by letting them dictate as you write or type. Sing songs, play words games, recite nursery rhymes and poems, or make up silly words. Cut words and letters out of junk mail or old magazines and let children make signs, artwork and games with them. Keep writing / drawing materials (e.g., paper and crayons or chalkboard and chalk) easily accessible so children can "write" (including scribbling) when they feel like it. Read aloud every day. Make a special reading time and place, where your child picks the book and gets to spend time sitting close to you.

Include print **in dramatic play : Plan a party** with invitations , plan and type a family letter invitation to the family friends etc

6.6.2 : **Summary** :

A print rich environment is simply defined as a classroom whereby young children are given many different opportunities to interact with many different forms of print. One way among many, to introduce preschoolers to the reading and writing process is by giving them opportunities to view print at or at school in ways that are meaningful to them.

6.6.3 : Questions :

Q1) What is Print rich environment? How does it enriches language development in children ?

Q2) Suggest more ways for a print rich environment in your class?

Q3) Describe how you will make your home print rich for your child?

6.7 : Smooth transition from mother-tongue to school language :

Introduction :

Children between the ages of three and six years should begin their educational journey in their own mother-tongues, learn through play and not subjected to tests of any kind as per NCERTfirst ever preschool curriculum.

Teaching through a child's mother-tongue or home- language is internationally recognised as most appropriate in the early years , the NCERT guidelines also acknowledge the challenge of language diversity in India. In case there are more than one language as mother tongue, teachers may allow as many languages as are in the classroom to be used for expression. With gradually exposing the child to school language. Children need a bi-lingual or multilingual environment for smooth transition says, NCERT, adding that all children should be exposed to sign language.

How can parents help in smooth transition from home language to school language ?

Children's first language, culture, and personal identity are inextricably linked. The positive development of each child requires maintaining close ties to the child's family and community. When schools respect and value a child's first language and culture, children, families, and communities stay securely connected. If children and their parents feel that their previously acquired language, background knowledge, and culture are not valued, children's sense of identity and self-worth can be negatively impacted. However, when schools capitalize on the richness of the culture (e.g., experiences, understandings, values, and language) that children bring to the classroom, children's learning and sense of belonging are enhanced.

Involving parents and community

Invite parents to share information about available community resources.

Talk with parents informally on the playground (if they pick up and drop off their children).

 Establish a parent network for newcomers at the school.

Indicate a drop-in time, signified by a special picture and sign on the door. Invite parents to come to the classroom to create dual-language books, or to tell or read stories in their fi rst language.

Have parents or community members share in a classroom experience such as cooking or planting a garden.

Invite parents or community members to discuss their careers (e.g., pharmacist, farmer, taxi driver, miner, veterinarian).

Invite parents to volunteer in the classroom.

Ask parents to bring in objects from home for the classroom, such as food containers, boxes, and newspapers or magazines in their first language for the dramatic play centre.

Encourage parents to serve on the School Council.

Invite family and community members (e.g., Elders, grandparents, retired volunteers) to come in and share stories.

Plan a picnic on the school ground or at a nearby park. Plan class visits to areas of interest in the community, for example, visit the local market, take photographs, and bring back produce to use in vocabulary development.

Role of Teacher –strategies to support transition to the school

- To practice the pronunciation of children's names
- The teacher has to learn a few words in children's first language
- Provide a little time and space for children to be on their own as it takes sometime to help them absorb the new environment
- Create a welcoming environment with the flexibility that allows parents to stay for a while if they can.
- When possible , access school personnel who can communicate
- Greet children using their first language
- The teacher has to go around the circle and ask everyone to give a greeting in the language they are most comfortable
- Pose a question to the class and let them respond by placing a marker by their name
- Use visuals in daily messages and other print material

- Whole group meetings/ circle time at the end of the day provide an opportunity for reflection and sharing include a goodbye song or poem or saying good bye in various languages reinforces sense of classroom community

Questions :

Q1) What is the role of community in supporting for smooth transition from mother-tongue to school language?

Q2) How can teacher develop home- school connections for smooth transition of home language to school language ?

.6.8 : Valuing multilingual classrooms :

Multilingualism refers to an individual speaker who uses two or more languages or to a community of speakers, where the use of more than one language is common. India provides the classic example of a multilingual context. Mohanty (2006) describes the multilingualism in India being at the "grass-root level" with the use of two or more languages in the daily lives of individuals.

 With multilingualism at the grass root level, a child's knowledge of more than one language also constitutes his/ her own identity (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2004). Identity formation takes place in children at a young age quite rapidly. Any discrimination against their linguistic identity, community and home culture, adversely affects their self-esteem and identity formation process, and thereby their ability and confidence to learn and school performance. Along with the identity aspect is also the fact that linguistic factors alone do not explain the differences in the academic performance of minority students in schools (Cummins, 1989). Hence, researchers encourage "additive" bilingualism as opposed to "subtractive" bilingualism so that children retain their native language as they learn English or another language. This also implies that in the early childhood years, teachers play a critical role in making all children feel welcome in the

classroom. At the same time, it is important to recognise that it is difficult for teachers to talk in as many languages as there are children in the classroom. Thus, culturally and linguistically sensitive teaching methodologies must be examined.

What are the benefits of multilingualism?

In the face of the challenges of implementing mother tongue/first language instruction, it is critical to also consider the benefits of maintaining bilingualism. Bilinguals show greater numb

Hence researchers encourage "additive" bilingualism as opposed to "subtractive" bilingualism so that children retain their native language. Teachers play an important role in making children welcome in the classroom. However, it is important to recognize that it is difficult for the teachers to talk in as many languages as there are children in the classroom. Thus, culturally linguistically sensitive teaching methodologies must be examined.Research evidences show that bilinguals exhibit great number of independent cognitive strategies at their disposal, greater flexibility in the use of these strategies to solve problem bilingual children up to the age of six generally tend to outperform non-lingual children on isolated tasks of metalinguistic.

Awareness pertaining to reading

Many research studies conducted show that bilingual children performed better on meta-linguistic and meta-cognitive tasks and also in school achievement compared to monolingual children.

Further, most studies on cross-linguistic samples revealed that literacy skills gained in one language can transfer to another language. Research also points to the need for continued support for exposure to different languages from infantry to old age. Those children who are exposed to high equality input in more than one language before three years of age and continual exposure after that age, performed better in reading, phonological awareness tasks. Early childhood is thus a good time to provide solid foundation for mother tongue or home language. We know that children are capable of learning more than one language at this stage and a sound language base in home language is beneficial for learning other languages.

Now that the benefits of multi-lingualism known, how can we incorporate it in early childhood curriculum ?

The objectives for multilingual education in early childhood years should promote a warm, secure learning environment where every child takes pride and appreciation for the linguistic and cultural differences and similarities.

- To foster pedagogy that allows many languages, cultures in the classroom interweaving of languages to promote smoother transition from home to school language.
- To facilitate reading with meaning here are some ways the ECE teacher can promote multilingualism in an ECE classroom
  - ✓ The curriculum should promote listening speaking skills in children in the language they are required to learn and that includes English as well.
  - ✓ Stores/rhymes can be taught in mother tongue/ home language and also in the regional language of textbook as well.
  - ✓ Children should be given opportunities and encourage opinions in whichever language they choose to children feel secure, confident to share and think which will develop their language better. Teacher should extent their thoughts by questioning why? instead of what?
- Circle time conversation: Here , all the children sit together as a group, and talk listen to others about anything new that they have learnt, heard or seen, experienced recently. In a child's communication, communication is important rather than the language. Hence should not be corrected as he/she communicates in whichever language is comfortable.
- **Peer interaction**: The curriculum encourages children to work in pairs or in small groups in a daily routine. As alternating group compositions allow children to mix with children of different language and cultural background which fosters sharing of language experiences. Also this encourages children to express in multiple ways.
- Print rich environment: The ECE classroom should be print rich in all the languages that exist in the classroom. Reading readiness should be ensured in mother tongue/ home language which enables the child for smoot transition from home to school environment

- Free play like doll play, fiction, books corner, block help in promoting language development through peer interaction and with teachers. Story books should be available in plenty and in more than one language, mother tongue and regional language.
- Teaching learning material used must be local and local artefacts , cultural resources can be utilized.
- Parents/community involvement: parents/community to be involved in the ECE program to talk about food, festivals, rituals, religion and so on. Children adapt slowly to different languages and culture. Hence, the benefits of multilingualism practices should be valued at the early years that includes the creation, appreciation of cultural awareness and adds academic and educational value.

  Multilingual classroom: ECCE perspective, or a developmental pedagogy, would suggest that language should be learnt by processes in the following order: 'Listen–speak–read–write.' In the early years, the focus is on listening and speaking as the major activities in the classroom, facilitated through free play with peers. Teachers should also attempt to learn a few words and phrases of the child's home language. In a multilingual classroom, children should be encouraged to express themselves in their own language and to pay attention to and learn from each other. This is a natural and easy process in play situations. Multilingualism and children's learning abilities are not the issue here, but rather the ability of the educational system to address the issue and find the appropriate solutions.
- A child's knowledge of more than one language constitutes his/her own identity. Identity formation takes place at a very early age in children. Any discrimination against their linguistic identity, communication and home culture has an adverse effect on their self-esteem and identity formation process which in turn affects their school performance.

Summary :

Research states that children who speak more than one language have more metalinguistic awareness. they are better at problem-solving , demonstrate greater creativity; perform better in school overall and express more tolerant attitudes towards others as compared to mono- lingual

children. An ECE teacher should be flexible enough and use multiple languages as in the classroom by encouraging children to express in the language of their own. Multilingualism has its own challenges but it has to be welcomed by the teacher in an ECE classroom.

Questions :

Q1) What is Multilingualism? What are the benefits and challenges of Multilingualism?

Q2) Suggest some ways of how you can incorporate Multilingualism in an ECE class room ?

Pre-schoolers in your care need daily opportunities to participate in activities that help them learn new skills or practice existing ones in fun, stimulating, and supportive environments. As you learned in Lesson 1, effective communication skills are integral to children's self-expression, to their development of social relationships, and to their learning. In your daily work in preschool, you should plan and embed opportunities for teaching language and communication skills throughout the day. This is essential for promoting language and communication in young children.

Supporting Communication for Preschoolers: Creating Natural Opportunities for Language

You have amazing opportunities to spark language and conversations in your preschool classroom. There are countless times throughout the day for you to encourage children to talk, read, and write. The first step in creating natural opportunities for communication is getting to know the children in your classroom and how they communicate or use language. The questions in the previous section will help you understand the diverse communicators in your classroom.

After you have gathered information about how children communicate in your classroom, you should use it to make decisions about experiences you want to provide or strategies you want to use. Think about the daily routines and experiences or activities taking place in your classroom: what opportunities for communication are natural in those routines? For example, during snack time, you can ask children questions about their favorite snacks, ask what they like to eat at home, or engage them in conversations about colors, textures, or tastes of different snacks. You may also provide them with choices of food items, or arrange the environment in ways that promote children's communication. You can, for example, provide children with small portions

of snack items to create opportunities for them to use language and ask for more if they want more. You may also purposefully place some food items out of their reach so they can ask you, or peers for them.

With careful planning, you can adapt and embed communication strategies into multiple experiences and routines in your preschool classroom. As children in your classroom are learning new skills, you will be continuously assessing their progress and adapting your strategies to continue to promote their development.

Providing a Language- and Communication-Rich Classroom Environment

Consider the following components of language- and communication-rich classroom environments:

Responsive adults: Respond to children's language and build on their ideas and interests. It's more important to focus on their ideas than on their grammar. If children use words incorrectly, simply model appropriate language and continue the conversation. For example, if Julia says, "My grandma give me a book," you could simply respond, "It's so nice your grandma gave you a book. What's it about?"

Frequent use of developmentally appropriate models: Children need to hear, listen to, and use language throughout the day. By using language that is at or slightly above the child's current level, you can promote development. Being aware of the level of complexity of the language you use is one of the most important things to remember when communicating with young children. For example, with young 3-year-olds, you might use three- to four-word sentences with simple vocabulary words to ensure that children can understand and participate in the conversation. As children get older, you can use more words in each sentence and introduce new vocabulary words. This means that you use language throughout your day and encourage children to use language too.

Intentionality: Intentional teachers purposefully select and use appropriate language models and literacy with children. This means that during your planning, and considering children's needs, you make decisions about words or sounds to use, new vocabulary to introduce, how to

describe events, materials, or feelings, or how to adapt activities and experiences to address the special learning needs of children in your classroom.

Environmental print and books: Remember to provide multiple opportunities for children to read and see books and print around the classroom. This includes reading frequently to children, labelling classroom spaces or objects, labelling in different languages that represent the backgrounds of children in your classroom, having lots of books readily accessible around the classroom, rotating books and materials based on children's interests and experiences, creating an inviting area in your classroom where children can read quietly or with other children, providing activities that involve drawing and writing, and embedding experiences that involve playing with sounds, words, and letters in activities and routines.

Reflecting on Language and Communication in Preschool

Knowing that your environment contributes greatly to children's learning, one of your starting points can be to reflect on the language and communication development of the children in your class. You can start with observations, communication with families, the developmental screening and assessment information you collect, and questions about each child's development and the interests and discoveries they are making. For example:

- What is the nature of the child's language? What type and length of sentences does he or she use? Does the child take multiple turns in a conversation?

- What languages is the child learning or speaking at home? To which language is the child most responsive?

- How does each child communicate that he or she is hungry, tired, bored, or ready for play?

- How does each child communicate with adults? Peers?

- How does the preschooler respond to books? Does he or she recognize basic concepts about print like holding books upright, turning pages, pointing to words and pictures?

- What types of books is each family reading to their preschooler?

- How are other areas of development being supported through books and reading?

- What writing experiences is the child having? Does the child try writing or scribbling letters? Does the child seem to understand that print has meaning?

By asking these questions, in collaboration with families, you have an opportunity to document and learn how each child develops language and communication skills while considering other areas of development, culture, and temperament. This process can help you and families gather information to support the planning for and development of responsive environments as preschoolers develop language skills and learn ever more complex ways to communicate their needs and wants.

Unit end Summary:

Almost all children learn the rules of their language at an early age through use and overtime, without formal instruction. One source for learning must be genetic the environment itself is also a significant factor. Children learn specific variety of language (dialect) that the important people around them speak. Children seem born not just to speak but also to interact socially. Even before they use words, the cries and gestures of the infant convey meaning Ex:- child cries when in hunger, children gestures to get cuddled up , these interactions help to make connections with other people and to make sense of experiences.

In brief language occurs through an interaction among genes, environment and child's own thinking abilities.

Exposure to print and letters/ letter sounds can happen without filling walls with words. That doesn't mean no words at all lables and words in context with learning activities are fantastic but posters with list of sight words in pre-school just make busy walls and print rich research suggests that it is both the quantity and quality of words that are spoken to children from 12-36 months that have an impact on their language development. With positive interactions, eye-contact with child, talking to them in meaningful context an adult talking to the child boosts their self confidence and in vocabulary development.

Read aloud, narrating stories , read aloud are excellent opportunities for children to listen, speak, repeat and narrate for good language acquisition the six principles of oral language must be focused upon the teacher. With parents and community support, the teacher should ensure smooth transaction of home language to school language. The role teacher is central in making

smooth transaction of home language to school language. The teacher should create a welcoming environment allowing parents to stay for a while if they can, greeting children in first language ,using one or more language as is in the classroom. Encouraging children to express in their home language. Research states that children who speak more than one language have more meta linguistic awareness, better school achievement, better problem –solving abilities, multi linguism is to be welcomed by the ECE teacher with careful planning and transact of the program.

Therefore, it is important to provide a variety of experiences to support children's communication and language skills. Creating language and communication rich environments that engage children in meaningful experiences that promote language development is utmost priority of an ECE teacher.

Unit 7- Additional Reference Material

Creating literacy rich physical environment: age appropriate books and other print and literacy material ;reading and writing corners ;classroom libraries; display of children's writing.

A high-quality literacy classroom for 3- and 4-year-olds provides an environment that not only supports emerging literacy skills but also engages children actively in practicing these skills. In such classrooms we can :

See

- Each child's cubby is labelled with name reinforcing the idea that words and names are written with letters. Other key areas of the classroom are also labelled, like the classroom learning centers; furniture that is used daily, such as chairs and tables; and physical aspects of the classroom, like walls, windows, and the carpet and floor areas. This helps build both a reading and sight vocabulary and provides opportunities to see how letters form words.

- Clearly defined learning cornerss that not only support exploration and learning through play, but reinforce key literacy skills. Examples of how learning corners support literacy are

  ✓ **Writing corners** provide the opportunity to practice writing letters of the

     alphabet, writing letters in isolation, and writing one's own name.

  ✓ **Reading corners** create dedicated space for book reading with book shelves offering variety of books and print -like story books , picture magazines and other reading material appropriate to children's level with cozy places and work areas that encourage children to look at the books alone and together and even to pretend to read.

  ✓ **Blocks and manipulative corner** encourage hands- on work with creating patterns and sequences of shapes, colours, and textures.

  ✓ **Art corner** allow children to express, re-create, and integrate learning experiences via drawings, paintings, modelling, and multi-step art projects. Art activities encourage building of vocabulary and conversation skills and provide the opportunity to express concepts, thoughts, and ideas.

- A well-planned schedule that makes time for both large- and small-group learning, individual play in learning corners, and one-on-one teacher-child literacy experiences. Use large-group experiences to model book reading—front cover to back cover, reading print left to right and top to bottom. Use small groups to practice word games that involve combining sounds and breaking apart words into sound parts. Use one-on-one time to review sounds associated with printed letters and to practice labelling and naming letters.

Hear

- Adults in extended conversations with children throughout the day, with multiple back-and-forth sequences that build more complex language and thinking, providing opportunities for children to have more extended conversations with each other.

- Spoken language during routine and transition activities that provide multi-step directions from the teacher for children to follow.

- Language activities like rhyming poems and songs that alert children to the sounds of language; playing games with letters, such as bingo or letter search, that aid alphabet knowledge and letter recognition; and building visual processing skills.

- Teachers working with children in small groups on breaking words into syllables or separating the first sound from words.

Planning for meaningful skill development within Early Literacy Programme- developing skills required for school based learning; skills for phonological development ;and higher order skills like creativity and problem solving in a language classroom:

Here are a few suggestions for early literacy activities. You can use this list as a starting point for classroom instruction..

Activities that help children learn the names of the letter-shapes in the alphabet and the sounds the letters make …

- Play games like alphabet bingo to teach letter names and shapes.
- Show a set of letters and ask the child to name them in order as quickly as they can.
- Print a mix of upper- and lower-case letters on chart paper and ask the child to circle the capital letters.
- Teach the sounds each letter can make as well as the name of the letter.
- Sing songs and recite rhymes that include the sounds associated with letters ('D' is for dog-/d/. /d/, /d/… dog).
- Move from identification to writing letters and forming simple words, especially words with high meaning for children, such as their own names.

Activities that help make children aware of sounds in language and provide opportunities to practice manipulating sounds

- Use rhymes, songs, and poems to help children hear repetitive sounds at the beginning and end of words.
- Move from simpler activities with sounds to practice with more complex operations.
  - ✓ Start with combining sounds to make words ('tooth' plus 'brush' makes toothbrush), to manipulating sound units that make up words (such as syllables, onset-rime, and phonemes), to breaking apart words.

Activities that help children remember spoken information

- Ask children to follow simple, multi-step directions in preparing for activities or carrying out classroom routines, such as getting ready for morning circle time, gathering materials and setting up for easel painting, cleaning up after snack, getting ready for lunch.

Activities that support oral language development

- Read books that expose children to varied and rich vocabulary through discussion of the pictures, text, and story development and sequence.

✓ Pose questions that ask the child to tell about what is happening in the story and in the pictures.

- Talk with children.

    ✓ Extend discussions so that the child actively practices new language skills.

    ✓ Initiate interactive dialogues that use new vocabulary and concepts and work with sounds and letters.

    ✓ Show children how to ask questions (such as what, when, where, why, how, and who).

    ✓ Help children develop language for making comparisons (These feel soft, but these feel hard).

- Go beyond building vocabulary to using vocabulary as a foundation for more complex skills such as grammatical knowledge, definitional vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

    - Help the child develop a "deep" understanding of new vocabulary by selecting print that uses the new vocabulary in context, providing different meanings for the same word, using the same word in different kinds of sentences.

Activities with books or other forms of print to help children understand how print works

- Make sure children can see the print while it is being read, and use your finger to track the print as you read to show children the direction.

    - Take dictation from children, having them tell what to write.

Activities for developing creativity and problem solving in a language classroom

- Classroom environment plays a crucial role in developing creativity and problem solving skill in young children. As teacher you can make a each child's voice matters a lot.

    ✓ Allow frequent discussions and interactions among children in the classroom

    ✓ Inspire innovation and create chances to resolve issues , exp: on a sudden rainy day discuss the ways to reach homes etc.,

- ✓ Encourage children to think and tell a new ending for a very familiar story
- ✓ Accept the mistakes made by children while trying new things.

Creative and Problem solving skills in language classrooms are foundational to the development of other skills and success in educational settings. Solving social problems, resolving conflicts, and being empathetic are core components of emotional intelligence that support effective learning (Bernard-Opitz, Sriram, & Nakhoda-Sapuan, 2001). Understanding the process of problem solving is more important than simply being given a solution each time a crisis arises. Children can learn to use this problem solving process to address the immediate situation they encounter as well as in other contexts. Early childhood environments can be structured to provide many opportunities to teach problem solving skills.

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundation for Early Learning (CSEFEL) lists four essential problem solving steps for young children to learn and act on:

(a) identify the problem,

(b) think about solutions,

(c) think about what will happen if this solution is implemented and how others will feel if it is implemented, and

(d) try the solution (see Joseph & Strain, 2010, for details on these steps).

These problem solving steps can and should be incorporated into the daily instruction (e.g., storybook reading, large and small group instruction, and center activities) in a classroom to support the development of young children's problem solving skills.

Using Storybooks to Teach Problem Solving Skills.Children's books often provide a context that allows them to identify the character's emotional state during the story and learn about the social skills and problem solving strategies the character uses as the story progresses.

Strategies to Use When Reading During storybook reading, teachers can use several strategies to support children's problem solving development. These strategies are identifying feelings, providing opportunities for responding, and repeated reading. Identifying feelings

Identifying others' facial expressions, body language, and feelings can help children recognize that a problem exists and is a key social-emotional skill for young children (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). Teachers should encourage children to suggest possible emotions that a book character might be feeling when he or she encounters a problem.

Provide opportunities for responding Providing opportunities for children to respond during storybook reading has positive effects on children's academic as well as social-emotional development (Partin, Robertson, Maggin, Oliver, & Wehby, 2009). By encouraging children to respond to books, caregivers can assess children's knowledge. Teachers can guide children to respond not only by answering questions but also by expressing sympathy and empathy, and by suggesting solutions to problems encountered by the characters. For example, teachers can help children come up with a list of solutions that the characters could utilize to solve their problems.

Repeated Reading Reading the same book for several days in a row provides opportunities for children to talk about the story, predict what will come next, learn new vocabulary, and talk about their own experiences (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). Furthermore, repeated reading is especially important for children with diverse learning abilities as it provides young children with a sense of mastery; they feel more confident that they know the story, can predict the outcomes, can read along with the teacher, and master problem solving skills learned in prior readings. Repeated readings allow children opportunities to examine different solutions the characters could use to solve problems. As books are re-read, the solutions generated by children might vary from day to day and present occasions for caregivers to expand on children's ideas. Through this process, children learn that there might be several possible solutions to each problem encountered, and evaluating each solution helps them select the appropriate one to try.

Role-play and modeling Role-play is a context in which children can express their feelings and experiences. For most children, role-play is a developmental milestone that occurs around the age of 3 (Berk, 2009). Role-play gives children a chance to act out the storyline from a book as well as events that they have observed, experienced, or considered. Audiobooks and storybooks can be placed in different centers to encourage this activity. Once children are familiar with a storyline, they can generate alternate solutions to a problem and then act out the solutions.

Children and teachers also can act out stories and scenarios with puppets or dolls, including problem scenarios that might have occurred earlier in the day. During role-play, teachers can help children practice using the four problem solving steps described earlier.

So as a teacher you play a vital role in helping children develop foundational social-emotional skills, including problem solving skills. Fortunately, children's classroom routines such as story time offer abundant opportunities to develop these skills.

Language across the curriculum – recognizing opportunities through out the day across activities for reading , talking and writing and organizing them in a planned manner.

(the following matter is taken from unit 6)

Language and literacy-related activities need to be infused into the daily schedule. As noted above, literacy activities, while centered in an area with books, tapes, and writing materials, need not be confined to any one area of the preschool classroom. Language and literacy learning goes on throughout the day.Teachers can incorporate these activities into the daily schedule to promote literacy for preschoolers by:

- Reading to children every day.
- Singing songs and learning finger plays.
- Writing what children say.
- Providing a variety of opportunities to use language.
- Displaying books and providing time and place for children to explore.
- Encouraging children to write.
- Surrounding children with printed materials, signs, and posters.

These goals are best achieved by thinking about how literacy can be integrated into all learning activities. Dramatic play, for example, provides a rich opportunity to infuse literacy into children's play. To illustrate, a doctor's office play scenario might include a sign-in sheet for patients, magazines to read while waiting to see the doctor, an eye chart to test vision, and a prescription pad for the doctor to fill in. There are also patient charts to complete and the

doctor's bill to dispense. Here are some other of the many possibilities for integrating literacy into dramatic play:

Literacy Materials:	How Children Could Use Them:
Menus	– Read menus in a restaurant
Food containers	– Read food packages
Calendars	– Write appointments on a calendar
Cookbooks	– Read recipes in cookbooks
Tickets	– Use tickets to play bus, movie theater, sports event
Storybooks	– Read stories to other children, dolls or stuffed animals
Paper or notepads and pencils	– Make shopping lists
Cardboard, markers, and tape	– Write and post signs for play grocery store
Pad of sales slips	– Write food orders, prescriptions, and receipts

Blocks	– Have paper, markers, and tape available for children to make signs for block building – Include books on architecture and building to inspire children – Encourage children to make blueprints of buildings they wish to make
Toys & Games	– Discuss colors, shapes, and pictures in lotto games – Provide matching games for visual discrimination
Art	– Invite children to dictate stories to go with art work – Share books about famous artists and their work with children
Sand & Water	– Add literacy props such as letter molds or road signs to the sand table – Encourage children to use words to describe how the sand and water feel
Music & Movement	– Write words to a favorite song on a chart – Have children use instruments for the sound effects in stories
Cooking	– Use pictures and words on recipe cards – Have a sign-up sheet for snack

Computers	– Use a word processing programme to make a book
	– Listen to audio
Outdoors	– Bring colored chalk and other writing materials outside
	– Have children observe street signs in the neighborhood
Group Times	– Read, tell, and dramatize stories every day
	– Lead discussions on how to listen to others
Daily Routines	– Use pictures and words to create a daily schedule that children can refer to
	– Have children sign-in each day

Adults need to interact with children in ways that promote literacy. Providing children with an environment and materials that foster literacy are crucial; but they are not enough. To make these literacy efforts truly successful, teachers also have to interact with children in ways that make literacy activities meaningful.

There is a strong connection between early reading success and the amount of de-contextualized talk that children engage in with adults. Simply put, this means conversation that goes beyond the here and now—language that conveys information about other times and places   leads to literacy learning. De-contextualized conversations allow children to relate first-hand experiences to the greater world. It is particularly important when preschool teachers read a story with a child. Rather than merely reading the text word for word, when the teacher stops to discuss the book's meaning with a child, she engages the child in de-contextualized talk.

Quality conversations and the amount of one-on-one or small group interactions that children engage in are highly related to language measures. In addition, cognitively challenging conversation and the use of a wide vocabulary by teachers are correlated with children's subsequent language and literacy development. The quality and quantity of interactions, not just the presence of reading materials and a story time routine, shapes early reading development. Early readers talk more frequently about literacy with adults, have interactions that contain more instances of extending a topic, and exhibit more accountability for their language.

Teachers need a range of teaching strategies to facilitate children's development of literacy skills. This is because the ability to read and write is not natural like oral language. It needs to be taught with careful planning and instruction. For very young children like preschoolers, literacy instruction involves both indirect and direct instruction. Children need opportunities to explore books and print on their own. They also need to be guided in their literacy explorations. Some ways that children could be supported in the preschool are:

- Model reading and writing daily.
- Create opportunities for children to use literacy-related skills (creative dramatization, making books, communication games, field trips).
- Share high-quality children's books and magazines, especially those related to what the children are investigating.
- Read aloud daily to the whole class (before nap, after nap, during group time), to individual children, or to small groups when they ask or when the time seems right.
- Read stories more than once so children can master content and use of language.
- Encourage the children to discuss books: to comment, to ask questions, and to make predictions about what will happen next.
- Encourage children to look at books and magazines at naptime.
- Help children integrate reading and writing into their play.
- Share songs, rhymes, and finger plays with the children.
- Foster children's use of oral language.
- Invite children to converse about their investigations.
- Take dictation from the children as they tell stories, label their artwork, prepare messages for others, or discuss things they have learned.
- Invite children to record their ideas and findings on phone/computer or on paper, as drawings, tallies, words, etc.
- Invite children to use writing materials as part of their play.
- Plan activities that include recognition of letters, words and numbers, such as cooking or mapping.

– Welcome volunteers who can read to or take dictation from the children. Remember they may need orientation or training.

– Encourage social literacy experiences such as sharing a book with a buddy or writing with a volunteer.

– Carefully select the programmes and videos children watch, and limit (or eliminate) the time children spend watching TV or videos.

– Help parents become involved in children's pre-literacy experiences.

Unit 8 Additional reference material

<u>Examination of prevalent practices of assessment in the early years including shruthlekh(dictation), sulekh(good handwriting), saswar vachan(recitation); the assumption these convey about children's literacy learning and development.</u>

Importance of assessment

Assessment is crucial to the learning process because it indicates the growth in learning to the various stakeholders in the learning process including children, parents and teachers.

This is particularly important during preschool and primary years because these are the foundation years that have an impact on the child's future. If there is no assessment then there is no understanding of the expected performance. This leads to a failure in course correction, leaving the child without skills and knowledge.

But in the case of early childhood education, most of the research recommends assessing young children by observation only. This fact has been reiterated by the Government of India. In fact, the Ministry of Women and Child Development published a document titled 'Quality Standard for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)' in 2014. Here are 4 points highlighted in this document on assessment methods:

- Caregivers are sensitive to and are able to understand factors that may be affecting children's progress/ performance

- Teachers/ caregivers observe children's learning and development and keep a record of how progress is made towards the goals

- Use information from observations to provide specific intervention for individual children, when required

- Use different tools and strategies that are continuous, ongoing and in the language understood by children

Assessment, if done right, is a valuable aid in discovering and nurturing a child's potential. It is not a measure of a child's progress against some external yardstick. In that context, the importance of assessment cannot be overstated.

Examining the prevailing situation:

We need to ask whether the present process of assessment fulfils the objectives of language and literacy development in young children. Does it lead to assessment of what actually needs to be assessed? To understand the present process let us analyse a language class.

Preschool Classroom: Teacher calls each child one by one and asks to recite a rhyme or poem which was already taught. Teacher gives full marks for children who recite the same poem with clear pronunciation (sasvar vachan), another child who recites different poem with clear pronunciation is not given any marks. That means here teacher is assessing for memory rather than the child clarity in recitation.

Dictation (shruthkekh): Teacher say words orally and children are supposed to write the word.The child who memorizes the words can write all the words correctly and he/she gets full marks and the child who writes the words based on the sound will not get any marks.

Sulekh (good handwriting) : Children in preschool age are in the process of development. Their fine motor development does not support to hold the writing material and write neatly as grown ups .So teachers giving marks based on the hand writing is not correct at this age.

The use of 'correct' words with 'correct' grammar and 'correct' pronunciation or 'correctness' in writing is termed as 'using pure and accurate language'. On the other hand, the ability that enables the child to speak, read and write with felicity and express herself is called fluency. In this the emphasis is more on meaning and context rather than on grammatical errors. Assessment at this stage needs to focus on fluency. Accuracy and correctness can come later. After the primary stage we may balance correctness and fluency and pay attention to both. We want to know the language abilities acquired by the child through assessment. Before starting, the assessor has to consider if the learners have been provided a variety of repeated opportunities to acquire these abilities. Unless they have had such opportunities, assessment is pointless. Generally , in the prevailing system it is believed that , good handwriting(writing of alphabets

and words) , recitation of rhymes and writing dictation without any spelling mistakes is considered as literacy learning and development in young children, as it is further believed that these are the foundational and prerequisite skills for later success in language and literacy learning.

Principles of assessment : assessing and valuing the processes of literacy rather than the product , assessing the context and authenticity of assessment.

The National Council of Teachers of English believes that literacy assessment is an integral part of literacy teaching and learning; that literacy assessment contributes to the conditions for literacy teaching and learning; and that professional knowledge about literacy assessment is a critical component of a literacy teacher's development and practice.

They also include a set of principles:

- Literacy assessment is a social process, not a technical activity. Accordingly, all student texts are assessed by knowledgeable humans.
- Literacy assessments always assume a classroom learning context; such assessments help stakeholders focus on strengths, areas of concern, goals for improvement, and actions to be taken. The assessment of literacy development and/or achievement therefore does not rely solely on standardized tests, which are especially disruptive to instruction.
- Literacy assessment is meaningful to the learner.
- Literacy assessment includes more than cognitive activities; it also includes a range of practices and perceptions, including beliefs about literacy, dispositions toward literacy, and self-efficacy regarding literacy.
- Literacy assessments are valid only to the extent that they help students learn.
- Literacy assessment is purposeful; therefore, assessments designed for one purpose—for example, program assessment—are not used for another—for example, individual assessment.
- Literacy assessment practices embrace several kinds of diversity, including diversity in languages, in learning styles, and in rates and routes of learning.

- Literacy assessment is varied and includes multiple measures of different domains, including processes, texts, and reflection. Accordingly, no single measure informs literacy instruction.

The Process of Literacy Assessment

To understand literacy assessment, we first need to think about the term "literacy," which is discussed throughout the materail. Literacy has traditionally been regarded as having to do with the ability to read and write. More recently, literacy has evolved to encompass multidimensional abilities such as **listening, speaking, viewing, and performing** (NGA & CCSSO, 2010), along with cultural and societal factors (**Snow**, 2002) that can facilitate or constrain literacy development. This multidimensional definition of literacy requires educators and policy makers to conceptualize literacy in complex ways. **Hence literacy assessments in early grades should give importance to the process of learning than the end product.** The following are the areas in which the teachers should focus to understand the child's level of literacy so that needed interventions can be planned.

Listening and Speaking

Children should be able to describe a picture, they should be able to express themselves freely and give their views on what they have heard. These could be conversations, lectures or discussions. They should be able to use correct words and respond in complete sentences to information seeking questions. They should be able to talk about known things, people and events.

What to assess:

- Children should be engage in conversation with others and talk confidently about matters of immediate and personal interest .
- Children should be describe objects, events and their plans for the day
- Children should be enjoy listening to stories and poems and making up their own stories and rhymes
- Oral test can be both formal and informal. Talking to children on different topics, asking questions, organising group discussions, having them act or mime can be a

part of the teaching learning process. During these the language abilities can be assessed.

- Question answer session In this children are taken through a question answer session. The initial questions should require only such answers that all children can provide. These questions could be around their daily life, their experience, their interest and needs. In this activity, the teacher, as the assessor, must give children plenty of opportunity to articulate their ideas. Of course, the teacher must have the capability and art of making good questions. This question answer session can assess the vocabulary, pronunciation and sentence formation ability of the children.

Reading with comprehension:

The basic issue here is reading pictures with understanding .Reading picture stories and be able to tell the main points of the material read. (S)he should also be able to interpret pictures and read accordingly to context.

What to assess:

- Children enjoy reading picture books and handle them carefully.
- Children understand how books are organized
- Children recognize familiar words in simple texts

Writing:

During the assessment of writing, try and see if learners are able to demonstrate prewriting skills confidently – colouring the pictures within the boundaries , holding a writing material like pencil/crayon to join the dots , trace and draw different lines , shapes follow left to right directionality, cut and paste paper , indulge in art and craft work.

What to assess:

Children use pictures, symbols, and familiar letters to communicate meaning, showing awareness of some of the different purposes of writing

Expression:

In this the learner should be able to make a picture of things or events according to his/her experience. Subsequently (s)he should be expected to make pictures on his/her own freely and talk about the event. We may also like to assess them on creating or extending stories etc.

What to assess:

Children express freely and confidently their experiences and about the events.

Story telling The child telling a story that (s)he has read or heard in his/her own words can be an important form of assessment. The story could also be something that (s)he has created herself. We should keep in mind this objective in assessing and take into account the expression, the presentation and the remembering of the order of events as indicators in assessment.

Describing:

Describing what has been seen, heard or read .In assessing language ability, description is a very important aspect. In the beginning of the primary classes the learner can be shown an object, a picture or some action in familiar context and asked to describe it. In the initial stages the description can start just with one sentence.

Assessing the context: Literacy is somewhat local , that is people engage in literate practices differently in different contexts. Different tools and social contexts invoke different strategies and ways of thinking. Common assessment practices do not recognize this fact; instead they assume that performance on a particular task in a testing context is representative of all literate contexts. But children perform differently, for example, in more meaningful or authentic activities. The Primary Language Record (PLR) (Barrs, Ellis, Hester, & Thomas, 1989), an early literacy assessment instrument, requires the assessment community (teachers, families, administrators, and students) to recognize (and document) performance in different contexts including "collaborative reading and writing activities," "play," "dramatic play," and "drama and storying" across different social groups that include "pair," "small group," and "child with adult" (p. 38). It draws attention to what a child can do independently and with different kinds of support. Assessing children's literate learning requires attending not only to what they know and do but also at least as much to the context in which they know and do. Indeed, as the PLR

89

manual notes, "progress or lack of progress should always be seen in relation to the adequacy of the context" (p. 18). When achild appears to be unsuccessful at literate endeavors, we want to know the circumstances in which this happens. Such circumstances include the extent to which literate practices and the logic of participation are made visible in the classroom and valued as purposeful social activities, the extent to which materials are relevant and accessible, and the extent to which classroom discourse is supportive, specific, reflective, nonjudgmental, and values problem solving (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Johnston & Rogers, 2001; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-MacDonald, Collins-Block, & Morrow, 2001).

Authenticity of assessment: Measuring children's early literacy development is an important part of a comprehensive early childhood program. Assessment is used to measure development and learning, to guide teacher and program planning and decision making, to identify children who might benefit from special services, and to report to and communicate with others.In addition to the ongoing, day-by-day systematic observations that link closely to the early childhood curriculum, there is a growing trend toward child assessment for program accountability. These assessments, in which early literacy is often a major component, reflect an increasingly high-stakes climate in which programs are required to demonstrate effectiveness in improving school readiness and creating positive child outcomes.

Concerns about trends in early literacy assessment include the use of assessments that focus on a limited range of skills and the nature of the assessments in use. Both factors may cause teachers to narrow their curriculum and teaching practices, especially when the stakes are high. For example, the ability to name the letters of the alphabet is usually assessed in a decontextualized manner in which the child is asked to name each letter as it is presented, one at a time. Unfortunately, this can lead to teaching in which the letters of the alphabet are presented in a discrete and decontextualized manner apart from children's names or the application of that knowledge to other meaningful print.

Although children may be capable of naming letters in a robotic-like, rote memorization manner, they may fail to acquire the long-term goal— an understanding of how the letters function for reading and writing and the ability to use what they know to make sense of the print in their environment.

Unit 9 - Additional reference material

<u>**Critical examination of typical practices used to teach English in early years**</u>

The variety and range of English teaching in India -The teaching and learning of English today is characterised by, on the one hand, a diversity of schools and linguistic environments supportive of English acquisition, and, on the other hand, by systemically pervasive classroom procedures of teaching a textbook for success in an examination, modulated by teacher beliefs influenced to varying degrees by inputs from the English-language teaching profession.

One way to broadly characterise English-teaching situations in India is in terms of

(a) the teacher's English language proficiency (TP), and (b) the exposure of pupils to English outside school, i.e. the availability of English in the environment for language acquisition (EE). (The reference for these parameters for school classification is Nag-Arulmani, 2000.) Kurrien (2005) thus identifies the four types of schools below:

1) English-medium private/ government-aided elite schools: proficient teachers; varying degrees of English in the environment, including as a home or first language.

2) New English-medium private schools, many of which use both English and other Indian languages: teachers with limited proficiency; children with little or no background in English; parents aspire to upward mobility through English.

3) Government-aided regional-medium schools: schools with a tradition of English education along with regional languages, established by educational societies, with children from a variety of backgrounds.

 4) Government regional-medium schools run by district and municipal education authorities): They enrol the largest number of elementary school children in rural India. They are also the only choice for the urban poor (who, however, have some options of access to English in the environment). Their teachers may be the least proficient in English of these four types of schools.

While these examples suggest a rough correlation between type of school management and the variables of teacher proficiency and environmental English, wide variation also obtains within

each of these school types. Private English-medium schools may differ in the learning opportunities they offer, and this may be reflected in differential language attainment (NagArulmani 2005); pupils in, for example, schools with class libraries read better than those in schools where reading is restricted to monotonous texts and frequent routine tests of spelling lists.

English Language Teaching in India traditionally, was taught by the grammar translation method. In the late 1950s, structurally graded syllabi were introduced as a major innovation into the state systems for teaching English (Prabhu 1987: 10). The idea was that the teaching of language could be systematised by planning its inputs, just as the teaching of a subject such as arithmetic or physics could be. (The structural approach was sometimes implemented as the direct method, with an insistence on monolingual English classrooms.) By the late 1970s, however, the behavioural-psychological and philosophical foundations of the structural method had yielded to the cognitive claims of Chomsky for language as a "mental organ".

There was also dissatisfaction within the English teaching profession with the structural method, which was seen as not giving the learners language that was "deployable" or usable in real situations, in spite of an ability to make correct sentences in classroom situations. In hindsight, the structural approach as practised in the classroom led to a fragmentation and trivialisation of thought by breaking up language in two ways: into structures, and into skills. The form-focused teaching of language aggravated the gap between the learner's "linguistic age" and "mental age" to the point where the mind could no longer be engaged.

The emphasis thus shifted to teaching language use in meaningful contexts. British linguists argued that something more than grammatical competence was involved in language use; the term "communicative competence" was introduced to signify this extra dimension.6 The attempt to achieve communicative competence assumes the availability of a grammatical competence to build on, and indeed the communicative method succeeds best in the first category of school described above, introducing variety and learner involvement into classrooms where teachers (and learners) have confidence in their knowledge of the language, acquired through exposure. However, for the majority of our learners, the issue is not so much communicative competence

as the acquisition of a basic or fundamental competence in the language (Prabhu 1987: 13). Input-rich theoretical methodologies (such as the Whole Language, the task-based, and the comprehensible input and balanced approaches) aim at exposure to the language in meaning-focused situations so as to trigger the formation of a language system by the mind.

Building children's oral language abilities through meaningful routines and activities

Emphasis on Listening and Speaking skills:

Teaching multiple languages to a young child is not easy, children have to become familiar with a new language and its sounds, learn to pronounce the new words and speak in the new language and above all learn to read and write multiple languages. Teaching of any language needs to consider the development of four key language skills: Listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening is the key to language learning, yet very often it is neglected in schools with an overt emphasis on writing.

There are several interesting activities to promote listening – language games that focus on words, rhymes and songs with variety and repetitive sounds and words, oral conversations, picture talk, listening to stories and dramatization of stories.

Listening helps children to develop phonological awareness i.e. understanding that words are made of sounds and that sentences can be broken down into words, and words can be broken down into syllables and sounds. By becoming aware of sounds and their written form, they also start seeing the relation between the spoken and written form of language. Listening is crucial for comprehension (understand), concept building, reasoning and knowledge building.

To promote good listening and speaking in children, remember to give your instructions clearly, repeating them if needed. When you read out, do it with appropriate pronunciation and intonation, ask questions that help children to reproduce, recall and reason. In this way you can create a motivating environment for language learning.

For further information refer unit 6

<u>Creating a print rich environment in the classroom:</u>

A print- rich environment is central to children's learning about language and literacy.

- ✓ A print rich environment can be made with …..
  - – picture books,
  - – posters,
  - – stories,
  - – sound books,
  - – story making activities,
  - – read-aloud stories,
  - – children's magazine,
  - – information books,
  - – picture reading material and
  - – flip books etc,.
- ✓ labelling all the things in the classroom (wall, window, chair, desk, etc.),
- ✓ display of children's names,
- ✓ display of simple classroom rules in written form,
- ✓ labelling children's drawings and display.
- ✓ a reading corner in the class if possible. Children need to have access to books to develop a bonding with them. They need to learn how to hold the book and turn the pages from front to back. Where do I start reading? What are letters? What are words? Where do I go next (left to right and top to bottom)? To gain the most benefit from books, children need hands-on experience with books alongside adult guidance. The books must be accessible and in children's hands, Young children, especially those who have had little experience with books, will need teachers to demonstrate careful handling of books.
- ✓ Similarly children should have access to writing instruments – e.g. pencil, paper, crayons, slate, low height running blackboards, etc. to stimulate them to write.

APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH ACROSS ALL GRADES

English is not a part of the environment of most children coming to government schools. Since English is the medium of instruction, the focus in the early grades should be more on developing English language skills through various kinds of activities using the child's mother tongue as a base to build the desired competencies. Mother tongue must not be perceived as an intruder but as a resource. The focus is on usage of English in day to day life. Children need exposure to the words and sounds of English – they need to hear the language as it is being spoken. This should be meaningful and the context has to be clear to children.

In early grades the emphasis of language learning should be on everyday English, around activities with which learners can engage at a personal level. Communicative Language Teaching approach is aimed at enabling learners to communicate in English, using their abilities, in a variety of meaningful contexts and situations. It is essential to note that in learning of any language, including English involves promotion of four basic skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing are important. These four skills also have different levels or stages.

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