

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction :

Language is a very essential element in the culture of a society. In fact, it is basis of all cultural activities of a social organism. In order to understand and appreciate the culture of a human society we must understand its language. It is through language that human beings communicate to each other and share each other's thoughts, feelings and emotions. Language is the vehicle of all human experience and as such is the only foundation of human culture and civilization. Without language a human society would be unthinkable. No society can built up and transmit its culture to future generation if it does not have a language. That is why language is not only an element in the culture of a society, but it is also an essential basis for building it up.

A social organism, like the individual organism, has an urge to live, and it lives through a process of renewal and transmission much like the individual organism. It revises, changes, modifies, reconstructs, according as situations demand, its philosophies and faiths, religious, customs, ideas, beliefs, standard, etc., on one hand, and on the other, it transmits them to younger generations to ensure their existence and continuity. This would not be possible without language. There are, however, some other means of communication – gestures, pictures, signals, etc. – but they are inadequate, and even if they serve some purpose on certain occasions, they prove effective only in so far as they reflect a certain language.

Language plays a vital role in learning and that consequently on intimate relationship exists between disabilities and deficits in language development.

Lancer (1958) describes the qualities of language as, "the most moments and at the same time the most mysterious product of the human mind. In language we have free use of symbolism, the record of articulate conceptual, thinking, without language there seems to be nothing like explicit though whatever."

Language is closely associated with organized learning activities. Many kind of learning are dependent on language development and the individual facility with verbal symbols. The ability to group the abstracts appear highly related to one's mastery of language.

Language is a means of expression of what is learned/ understood. The pupil who is apt in the use of language will be able to think better and will make himself understood by his classmates. On other hand the individual who is emotionally maladjusted will have difficulty in thinking and comprehension.

The Nature of Language :

Language is "a learned arbitrary system of vocal symbols through which human beings interact in terms of their common cultural experience", and "language habits are more than motor skills of tongue and lip; they are units of sound and units of thought established in physical form within the brain".

Importance of Teaching English :

English as the language used in different parts of the world. English language has also assumed an important place in India as for the last 250 years the people who speak this language had maintained a constant and intimate touch with India. It has become a part of our educational set up. And today when some of our thinkers, philosophers and educationists speak of replacing English by Hindi in our education system are at same time not ready to do the same because of the following reasons :

Literature :

The literature in English is as wide and varied as life itself. All the development, inventions in the field of Science and Technology, trade and Commerce etc., have been recorded in this language. In short it can be said that knowledge of English has become essential for establishing intellectual, cultural, economic, commercial and political relations with the rest of the world.

A Link Language -

The knowledge of English is also necessary for achieving international integration and the national integration as well. It is spoken and understood by a greater number of people in India than any other regional language.

And it is with this language itself that we communicate with foreigners – we understand their feeling, exchange our views about something, thus exchange of ideas takes place, we come to know of the various likes and dislikes of each other. Thus a step forward for international integration.

1.1 Elements of Language -

Durkin D., (1996) says “the child begins speaking with the meaning less utterance, when this utterance gets meaning it becomes a language. Language is the basic tool for understanding and expressing the ideas” and learning of this tools includes four skills (elements)

- (i) Listening
- (ii) Speaking
- (iii) Reading
- (iv) Writing.

1.1.0 Listening -

Listening differs from hearing, which is a physiological process that does not involve interpretation. One can hear a foreign language with good auditory acuity but be unable to listen to what is being said. In contrast to hearing, listening demands that one select appropriate meanings and organize ideas according to their relationships. In addition, listening calls for evaluation, acceptance or rejection, internalization, and at times appreciation of the ideas expressed. Listening is the foundation of all language growth and the child with a deficit in listening skills has a handicap in all the communication skills.

When teachers ask children "to listen" they do not mean they should simply hear, nor do they mean they should just recognize the words being spoken. When children are directed to listen, they are expected to comprehend, or audit, the communication message being sent. Good listening means not only understanding what is said but also the ability to listen critically, to make judgements and evaluations of what is being said.

1.1.1 Speaking -

We know that speech is to be the foundation of all our language work. Oral language, including listening and speaking, is identified as the primary form of language. The child's first attempt to use vocal mechanism is the birth cry.

Careful and systematic training in the actual sounds and manners of speech (speech training) will enable the majority of pupils to present their ideas attractively and clearly enough to hold for long the interest and attention of their listeners.

1.1.2 Reading -

Dr. Michael West * mentions five stages in the reading process, viz. word recognition, word interpretation, synthesis, grouping, and skimming. Williams S. Gray, in the Teaching of Reading (A second report : 36th yearbook of the National Society for the study of education) defines the process of reading thus "Reading involves the recognition of the important elements of meaning in their essential relation, including accuracy and thoroughness of comprehension". He further states that reading is also a form of experience that modifies personality.

The emphasis in Dr. West's analysis begins with word-recognition (which means a knowledge of the individual words, their spelling and pronunciation) and it continues through word interpretation (the meanings of the words), synthesis (recognizing words in-groups), and grouping (interpreting their meaning in proper relationship). And lastly skimming (the process of focussing attention on the essential points and getting the meaning looked for). All these are important. Meaning through reading is arrived at by looking at the printed page and understanding the denotation and connotation of individual words in their relationship with one another. The skill in reading consists in not only gradually increasing the span of eye so that the reader can see more and more at one glance but also in increasing the speediness of the process involved in interpreting the printed symbols in terms of the thoughts or ideas they convey. A good reader is not one who reads fast but one who understands as fast as he can read.

* Dr. West, M., language in education, chap. the psychology of reading.

1.1.3 Writing -

The chief way by which we record our thoughts and speech and pass them to other people is by writing them down. Even before having learned to write man has developed methods of communication. He used figures, which meant some-thing-such drawings are to be seen on the walls of some caves even to day.

The New Encyclopedia Britanica (vol. 19) defines writing as "a system of visual communication, using signs or symbols that are associated with conventional meaning or sounds – they may be recorded on the surfaces of such substances as paper, stone clay or wood".

Maxine greene (1987) defines writing as "a symbolic activity of meaning making – as a tool of understanding as well as communication".

Moffett (1979) defines writing as –

- (i) The physical act of placing words on a page.
- (ii) Taking dictation and copying; recording graphically ones own words or more frequently the words of others.
- (iii) Fashioning lexical, syntactic and hetorical units of discourse into meaningful patterns.
- (iv) Elaborating inner speech into outer discourse of a specific purpose and specific audience.

We may define writing as a visual representation of speech also it is a system of human inter representation of speech also it is a system of human inter communication by means of verbal marks used conventionally.

1.2 Learning difficulty -

It may be defined as the obstacles faced by students (learner) in acquiring / learning a given context or in other words the learner are finding it difficult to understand some particular concepts which are being taught by the teacher. In this study, learning difficulty may be defined as inability of students to solve correctly the given items in different components of English language.

1.3 Minimum Levels of Learning* -

The need to lay down minimum levels of learnings (MLLs) emerges from the basic concern that irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex, all children must be given access to education of a comparable standard. The major focus of the policy formulation behind the MLL exercise is upon equity and reduction of existing disparities. One can also state the MLLs in terms of learning competencies expected to be mastered by every child by the end of a particular class or stage of education. In operational terms, 80 percent or more of the children mastering at least 80 percent of the prescribed learning levels.

MLLs is confined to the curricular areas of

- # Language
- # Mathematics
- # Environmental studies (including social studies and science)

* Minimum levels of learning at primary stage, (1995) New Delhi; NCERT.

Minimum Levels of Learning in Language :

At the primary level, language occupies a pivotal place in the curriculum. The basic skills acquired through language learning facilitate learning of concepts in other areas. Moreover, in shaping of the personality of the child and in all his/her effective transactions in the day-to-day life situations, the nine basic language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, writing, comprehension of ideas (through listening and reading), functional grammar, self-learning language use and vocabulary control play significant roles.

Gradation of Competencies for Different Classes :

The minimum levels of learning have been stated in terms of competencies that every child should be able to develop in the school.

The competencies have been listed year wise. However, the competencies of class-I are to be carried forward through classes II to V. Competencies listed under each class are the starting points for building these competencies. Competencies for class II are as follows :

S.No. Competencies

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|----|-----------|-----|--|
| 1. | Listening | 1.1 | Listen with understanding to simple but unfamiliar poems, songs and stories. |
| | | 1.2 | understand conversation & dialogue in familiar situations. |
| | | 1.3 | Understand oral requests, instruction, commands and question in familiar situations. |

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|----|---|-----|--|
| 2. | Speaking | 2.1 | Pronounce all sounds of the language. |
| | | 2.2 | Recite poems and songs in a group and individually. |
| | | 2.3 | Answer simple questions requiring full answers. |
| | | 2.4 | Seek information about familiar things. |
| 3. | Reading | 3.1 | Recognize infrequent letters & conjunct letters. |
| | | 3.2 | Read large and small prints. |
| | | 3.3 | Read aloud rhymes, poems, songs and simple stories. |
| 4. | Writing | 4.1 | Copy words and sentences. |
| | | 4.2 | Take simple dictation of known words. |
| | | 4.3 | Write simple guided descriptive sentences. |
| 5. | Comprehension of ideas (through listening & reading). | 5.1 | Recall sequence of events in a short spoken or written text. |
| | | 5.2 | After listening be able to answer questions of 'what' and 'how'. |
| 6. | Functional Grammar | 6.1 | Become aware of similarities between words on the basis of word beginning, word ending & word roots (prefixes, suffixes & word stems). |
| 7. | Self Learning | 7.1 | Be able to use simple picture encyclopaedia where available. |

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|----|--------------------|-----|--|
| 8. | Language Use | 8.1 | Speak politely & be attentive while listening. |
| 9. | Vocabulary Control | 9.1 | Be able to acquire reading comprehension vocabulary of approx. 2000 words. |

These competencies are the translation of competencies of Hindi language. The students can achieve these competencies if their mother tongue is English.

1.4 Terms Defined -

1.4.0 Semantics :

Semantics is the system of meaning in language. It is the most recent area of language to be studied by the linguistic and perhaps the least understood. Children with meager vocabulary or usage and youngsters who have difficulty relating a string a word to a meaningful association may have a semantic language disorder.

1.4.1 Syntax :

Syntax refers to the grammar system of language the way the words are strung together to form sentences. Different languages have developed different syntactic or grammatical systems. In the English language (unlike some other languages), word order is extremely important to convey meaning. Thus "john pushes a car" has a different meaning from "A car pushes John." A child with a syntactic language disorder may not have learned how to order words in a sentence.

1.5 Statement of Problem -

English language for school going children in India is a bit difficult task probably because it is taught as the record language. Students do not get proper atmosphere and there are so many factors that affect the learning of English language.

The present problem is stated as "A Study of Learning Difficulties in English Language at class III level with special reference to minimum levels of learning."

1.6 Need & Significance of the Study -

Knowledge of English language becomes important to every person in the present era. The major reason for stress on English is because most books on all branches of knowledge are available in English. To cope up with the world in the era of explosion of knowledge the knowledge of English is a must.

In the primary classes we can see that many students can correctly produce whatever they have learned (in academics) in a very well formed language, when they are well acquainted with the medium.

But if the medium is different from their mother tongue, they find it very difficult to express/put forth their views in verbal or written form.

This condition is very common in children who are studying in English medium school. Not all but a considerable number of students are there who cannot converse or express their views in English. The reasons can be many, like transferred from Hindi to English medium all of the sudden or no English background at home, or no guidance for this language.

It is found that target students are not acquiring MLLs and researcher did not find any study related to MLLs in English language. Students face various learning difficulty in English language. When the child has learning difficulty it becomes clear that he/she is not well competent in various skills of language.

Keeping in view, all this reasons and also to find out what exactly is part/parts not understood by the children in school, the present study was taken up.

1.7 Objective of the Study -

- (i) To identify students with learning difficulties in English language.
- (ii) To identify the learning difficulties in English language with respect to MLLs.
- (iii) To study the achievement of children in various components of English language.
- (iv) To study the correlation between the various components of English language.
- (v) To study the effect of pre-primary education on the achievement of the children.
- (vi) To study the effect of parents education on the achievement of the children.
- (vii) To study the nature and causes of learning difficulties.

1.8 Research Questions -

- (i) Who are learning difficult children ?
- (ii) How can we differentiate them from other students ?
- (iii) Where exactly is the problem with these children ?
- (iv) How to over come learning difficulties ?

- (v) What is correlation between each component of English language test?

1.9 Hypotheses -

- (i) There is no significant difference between the achievement of two group (section A and section B) of students.
- (ii) There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys & girls.
- (iii) There is no significant difference between the achievement of students with high education of father and low education of father.
- (iv) There is no significant difference between the achievement of students of high education of mother and low education/ illiteracy of mother.
- (v) Students who got pre-primary education may achieve higher than the students who did not get pre-primary education.

1.10 Delimitation -

This study is on the student of class – III of D.M. school, Bhopal. The researcher selects only two sections of class-III for data collection for the present study.

1.11 Variables -

Dependent Variables :

- (i) The achievement of the students in English language.
- (ii) Learning difficulties in English language.

Independent Variables :

- (i) Sex
- (ii) Pre-primary Education.
- (iii) Parents' Education.