

**Block****1****KNOWING THE LEARNER**

---

**Block Introduction**

---

**UNIT 1****The Language Learner**

---

**5****UNIT 2****The Unreached Learner**

---

**22****UNIT 3****The Learner with Special Needs**

---

**41****UNIT 4****Helping the Learner to be Autonomous**

---

**65**

---

## EXPERT COMMITTEE

---

### Prof. Malati Mathur (Director) SOH

Prof Ameena Kazi Ansari  
Jamia Millia Islamia  
New Delhi

Dr Nupur Samuel  
Ambedkar University  
Delhi

Dr Ipshita Hajra Sasmal  
Ambedkar University  
Delhi

Dr Anand Prakash (Retd.)  
Formerly at Hansraj College  
University of Delhi

Dr Chinganbam Anupama  
Kalindi College  
University of Delhi

Dr Chhaya Sawheny  
Gargi College  
University of Delhi

Mr Ramesh Menon  
Symbiosis Institute of Management  
and Communication, Pune,  
Maharashtra

Dr Ruchi kaushik  
Shri Ram College of Commerce  
University of Delhi

Dr Cheryl R Jacob  
Ambedkar University  
Delhi

Dr Hema Raghavan (Retd.)  
Formerly at Gargi College  
University of Delhi

Dr Vandita Gautam  
Motilal Nehru College  
University of Delhi

### IGNOU Faculty

Prof. Neera Singh

Prof. Malati Mathur

Prof. Nandini Sahu

Prof. Parmod Kumar

Dr. Pema Eden Samdup

Ms. Mridula Rashmi Kindo

Dr. Malathy A

---

## COURSE PREPARATION

---

### BLOCK 1: KNOWING THE LEARNER

Prof Jacob Tharu: Unit 1, Retired, Department of Evaluation, EFLU (formerly EIEFL), Hyderabad

Ms Shefali Ray: Unit 2 & 3, ELT Consultant and Author, Formerly SCERT, Delhi

Prof Prema Dheram: Unit 4, EFLU (Formerly CIEFL), Hyderabad

---

### BLOCK 2: METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Dr Jyoti Kholi: Unit 1, Sr. Lecturer, M V College of Education, Delhi

Dr Monishita Hajra Pande: Unit 2, Assistant Professor, Ambedkar University, Delhi

Prof R Megnathan: Unit 3, NCERT, Delhi

Prof Rama Mathew: Unit 4, Professor Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi, Delhi (Formerly EFLU)

---

### BLOCK 3: MATERIAL AND RESOURCES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING

Dr Meera Balachandaran: Unit 1 &2, Former Principal, Ramjas School, Director-Education, Quality Foundation of India, Delhi

Ms Vandana Lunyal: Unit 3, Associate Professor, Regional Institute of English, Chandigarh

Dr Lina Mukhopadhyay: Unit 4, Associate Professor, Department of Training and Development, The English and Foreign Language University, Hyderabad

---

## COURSE COORDINATION & BLOCK EDITING

---

Ms Mridula Rashmi Kindo, IGNOU (Course Coordination) and (Content & Language Editing)

Prof Anju Sahgal Gupta, Former Professor of IGNOU (Content & Language Editing)

---

## SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE

---

Mrs. Munni Naudiyal

Assistant Executive (Data Processing), New Delhi

---

## PRINT PRODUCTION

---

Mr. Y. N. Sharma

Assistant Registrar

MPDD, IGNOU, New Delhi

---

June, 2021

©Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2021

ISBN:-

*All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means, without permission in writing from the Indira Gandhi National Open University.*

*Further information about the School of Social Sciences and the Indira Gandhi National Open University courses may be obtained from the University's office at Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110 068, India or the Official Website of IGNOU: [www.ignou.ac.in](http://www.ignou.ac.in)*

Printed and published on behalf of the Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, by Registrar, MPDD, IGNOU, New Delhi

Lasertypeset by Tessa Media & Computers, C-206, Shaheen Bagh, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-25

Printed at:

---

# COURSE INTRODUCTION

---

## English Language Teaching

English Language Teaching is a 4-credit, Skill Enhancement Course, which has 3 blocks consisting of 12 units. This course will help you get an understanding of the learners, the learning process, and the teaching-learning of English in terms of new and more effective methodologies of classroom management, materials selection and evaluation. This course will help students who are interested in teaching or in understanding the teaching-learning process to:

- i) gain insights about different types of language learners, for example the socially and geographically unprivileged, learners with special needs, and so on.
- ii) reflect on classroom discourse and innovative teaching-learning strategies so that the teacher-learner may more effectively teach the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. At the same time to integrate all the skills so that the learner may use these skills for better communication.
- iii) make the teacher-learner aware of new theories that are prevalent in terms of the learners, the learning process, classroom management, material selection and creation, evaluation and methodology of teaching. The use of technology is also emphasised.

The crucial factor in the language learning process is, of course, the learner, so the programme begins with the attempt to understand the learner, and specifically the learner factors which affect second language acquisition. The classroom is the space where teaching-learning takes place. We discuss the strategies within this space to make learning more effective.

Some of the questions which teachers are generally confronted with are:

- i) What will be the effect on my class if I use textbook X rather than textbook Y?
- ii) What are the best procedures of correcting mistakes, and evaluating with a human face?
- iii) What are the effective methods and strategies used in teaching-learning the different skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing?
- iv) Are there more interesting and effective ways of classroom organisation and management?

These questions have been dealt with in this Course. The blocks are as follows:

Block 1: Knowing The Learner

Block 2: Methods of Teaching English Language

Block 3: Materials and Resources for Language Teaching

---

## **BLOCK INTRODUCTION**

---

### **Block 1: Knowing the Learner**

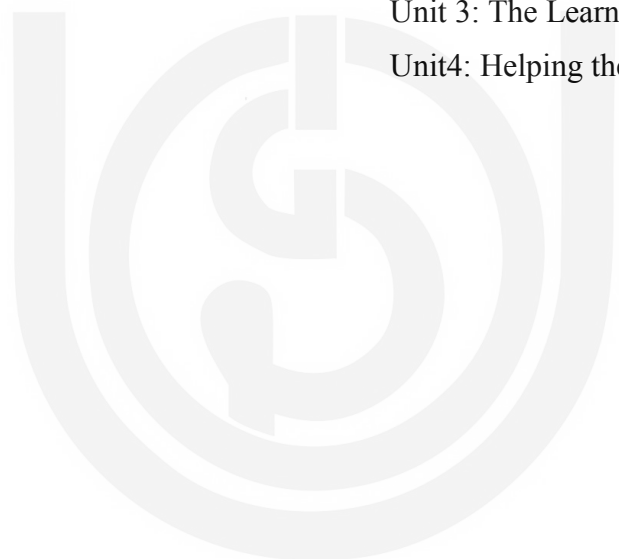
The main focus of this block is to help you understand that the learner is an individual who brings with him/her preferred learning styles, degree of intelligence, aptitude for language learning, attitude, motivation, and so on. In the first Unit of this block (Units 1), we give you a general description of the learners in terms of their capabilities and learning resources (personal and social). In Units 2 and 3 we focus on the disadvantaged learners and learners with minor disabilities. This is in keeping with the government policy of integration of all groups within the mainstream of education. Unit 4 deals with learner autonomy. This provides learners with more efficient learning strategies, assists them to identify their own preferred ways of learning, encourages them to set their own objectives and adopt realistic time frames to achieve them, develops the learners' skill in self-evaluation, and so on. The units are as follows:

Unit 1: The Language Learner

Unit 2: The Unreached Learner

Unit 3: The Learner with special needs

Unit 4: Helping the Learner to be Autonomous



ignou  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY

---

# UNIT 1 THE LANGUAGE LEARNER

---

## Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction: Learner Factors that Affect Learning in School
- 1.2 The Personal and Unique Quality of Learning
- 1.3 The Student's Readiness to Engage with a New Topic
- 1.4 Interest and Motivation for Schoolwork or Studies
- 1.5 Learner Characteristics that Influence Learning at School
  - 1.5.1 Characteristics Lying More in the Cognitive Domain
  - 1.5.2 Learning Styles and Preferences
  - 1.5.3 Multiple Intelligences
- 1.6 Flexibility in the Curriculum: Valuing Diversity and Promoting Autonomy
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Hints to Check Your Progress
- 1.9 Suggested Reading

---

## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

---

This unit aims to help extend your understanding and appreciation of

- the various ways in which children (as whole persons) differ from one another;
- the distinction between capacity to learn and alternative styles or modes of learning;
- how some of these characteristics influence children's engagement with the curriculum; and
- special aptitudes that nearly all children have which can make them contributors to the curriculum.

---

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION: LEARNER FACTORS THAT AFFECT LEARNING IN SCHOOL

---

Learning occurs both through natural process of socialization in everyday life and through planned formal instruction in school. Both are important for the development of the child into an adult who is well integrated with society. In this unit we will focus on child related factors that influence learning in school, which is our primary (but of course not only) concern. What are some of the personal characteristics of learners that we need to keep in mind when developing the curriculum and planning classroom activities? Some of the points we discuss relate to school-based learning in general, and some are more directly related to **learning language**.

---

## 1.2 THE PERSONAL AND UNIQUE QUALITY OF LEARNING

---

Learning is an individual process. Even if there is a class of thirty, receiving the same lessons based on the same textbook and monitored by the same tests, each child's learning is a unique process. Schools and classes within them may be large, but it is the progress of the individual – shown in the report card—that children (and parents) are interested in. Even in our mass education system with several lakhs appearing for a Board examination, each answer script is *evaluated separately*. Thus what each child learns from common instruction is our focus of interest. Earlier we tended to think that the new knowledge in a lesson simply got added to a store in the learner's mind. This was called the “jug and mug model” of teaching. Knowledge from the teacher's jug is poured like milk or water into each child's mug. We know now that children's minds are not ‘mugs’ of the same type and little packets of (new) knowledge are not simply received as they are. Even more important is the idea that learners are not only receiving additional packets of knowledge. It is useful to think of each child's development over time as a journey on which many things are experienced, including of course what comes from school lessons. The learning from all these prior experiences is what each *child brings to class* on any day. The new input from the lesson has to be *integrated* with the knowledge that is already there. So, the new learning is not a simple matter of adding little bits. Various personal qualities of the child will affect this process of learning or ‘uptake’ from a lesson. A recognition of this uniqueness – which means diversity in the class – is central to the approach to curriculum and learning. One of the major challenges facing the teacher is to adapt the standard or common material in the text book to suit the qualities or needs of varied learners.

In this unit we take up two themes that might help us understand more about individual differences among learners that we hope common instruction will respond to. One is the notion of readiness for learning - the link between prior learning and what is new in a lesson. The other is the variation in children's *ways of learning* - which is related to *how* they engage with and take in the new knowledge that is presented to them in school lessons. Our focus will be on language learning.

---

## 1.3 THE STUDENT'S READINESS TO ENGAGE WITH A NEW TOPIC

---

All of us have had the experience as students in school of finding certain topics taken up in class ‘difficult’. The basic ideas did not make sense, the explanations did not help and we could not handle the practice exercises or problems. In some cases, a sensitive and resourceful teacher has provided special help in various ways to help learners overcome such difficulties fairly quickly, so that they could keep up with the others. In other less happy cases, the difficulty and lack of understanding was overcome only much later - in remedial lessons, but sometimes never at all. This happens over and over again to many students at all levels. This is because there is a *mismatch* between what the teaching plan for the topic *assumes as available prior knowledge* and what individual students actually have. This is a problem that always comes up when a standard syllabus is covered according to a fixed calendar. Many learners are not ready for the given lesson.

If they do not learn as expected, it is because of this inadequate preparation, and not because of low learning capacity

The standard syllabus for any subject is based on certain logical and reasonable assumptions. The syllabus for Class V builds on the Class IV syllabus, and the Class VI syllabus builds on what is in the Class V syllabus, and so on. The problem in the classroom arises because every child has not properly learnt or mastered everything covered earlier. Teachers often do some revision before taking up a new topic. This is of course useful, but may not be enough. The important concepts that the new lesson or unit will build on need to be identified carefully and revision should target these points. This will enable those who are less prepared or behind others to follow the new material and keep up with the others in class. The important idea about readiness is that it is *not a fixed* characteristic of the child, but a highly variable factor closely *linked to particular topics*. A child might be unclear about certain point of grammar (e.g., She lives in X /She is living in X/ She lived in X). But the same child might know most of the words in a story or poem that comes in the same textbook unit. In other subjects too we will find children having difficulties with ideas related to one topic but at the same time learning quite happily in another area. Thus, the factor of low readiness which may come in different lessons and subjects is not related to any basic ability or capacity to learn. It is *not a fixed* characteristic of the child. A student who shows lack of relevant knowledge in any area, needs to be given specifically planned help. As mentioned earlier this will allow her/him to catch up with others. If sufficient help is provided in the initial weeks of a term, a student’s readiness problem might slowly disappear. This is one of the most challenging areas in pedagogy.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) What is ‘readiness’? What are the ways in which this factor can be used effectively by the teacher in the learning process?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) ‘Readiness’ is not a fixed characteristic of a child. Discuss the statement in the light of what you have read in the unit and understood from your own experience.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

## 1.4 INTEREST AND MOTIVATION FOR SCHOOLWORK OR STUDIES

---

All of us must have had the experience ourselves or of those we know well losing interest in studies and wanting to give up - and even drop out - at some time or the other. Fortunately, these negative moods change after some time in many cases. When these students get back to studies, they usually have a large backlog to deal with or may have lost a year. We need to note the distinction between this *general loss* of interest and motivation, and negative attitude students sometimes develop to a particular subject or topic or teacher. This will affect learning in that subject, but the student might be doing quite well in other subjects, and on the whole be happy at school.

The general problem of interest and motivation is not linked to a particular subject or teacher. The negative attitude seems to apply to practically all school activities, which can also lead to getting more isolated and unhappy. There are two possible causes of this condition. One is the feeling that everything is too difficult and that there is no real help from teachers or students (friends). It could be that the student started the term with many gaps in prior learning (readiness), but no diagnosis leading to appropriate action was taken up. She/he would have found lessons difficult to follow from the beginning. Sometimes other children may make fun of such students. Unit tests reinforce the fact of being far behind others, and usually no help to improve is provided. All this can lead to feeling unable to do anything successfully and a sense of worthlessness. (We will discuss this idea again under *self-esteem*). Such loss of confidence often makes a child unwilling even to try, and interest and motivation are slowly lost. Such occurrences are not the individual teacher's fault: the problem lie in the larger system. The already overburdened teacher cannot provide intensive individual attention to each student. However, the teacher can try and adapt the syllabus and materials to some extent. The important point here is that teachers need to convey to 'weak' students that they (teachers) are aware of students' difficulties and are trying to help them. Encouragement can be shown in small ways. The feeling of being cared for matters greatly to such children. Children need to feel they are welcome in school and class, and also that they are respected. The gentle pressure they feel should be to try and keep trying, and not necessarily to succeed.

Low motivation is nearly always a *temporary condition* initially. It can become more pronounced if there is no support. But helping a student to overcome loss of motivation and interest even in one subject area can have positive effect in other areas as well. Thus, we can see the value of creating and maintaining a supportive social climate in classrooms.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Why do students lose interest in school work in general? What can the teacher do to help them renew their interest in their studies?

.....

.....

.....

.....



---

## 1.5 LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS THAT INFLUENCE LEARNING AT SCHOOL

---

The two factors we considered above –readiness and motivation—are strongly influenced by what happens to the child, in other words, by external events. By changing the environment, a student’s readiness and motivation can be changed. There are also factors which influence learning that lie within the child and seem to be fairly stable. When we describe a person we usually focus on such qualities. As students of literature at high school, we have all written ‘character sketches’ of individuals who appear as characters in plays or stories. The qualities focused on are ones that lie within and do not change. Certain qualities of individuals that are related to their general nature or *personality* are of interest to us in the context of learning at school. We now look at some of these qualities that differentiate different types of learners among children. We must remember that these characteristics *especially of school age children* are not altogether fixed. Though relatively stable they can change gradually —and teachers and peers can contribute to this process.

Some qualities appear to be more related to the capacity to learn and solve problems especially in the context of studies at school. A second category is more related to preferences and habitual ways of doing things, i.e. what a person is comfortable with. Feelings and social relationships are covered here.

### 1.5.1 Characteristics Lying More in the Cognitive Domain

#### a) General Scholastic Ability

One of the very commonly used words when teachers and parents talk about children in school is ‘bright’. Parents sometimes compare one child with a brother or sister and describe one as ‘bright’ and the other as less so. Teachers also know who the ‘bright’ ones in their classes are. The term is associated with ability to understand and remember what is taught in various subjects, learning quickly and doing well in tests. It is unfortunately often used carelessly as we shall see later in this section. The basis of the term is the notion of *intelligence* - which is well known (but not well understood.) It is true that some individuals consistently perform better in school tests, and are good at solving puzzles and riddles and are adept at memory-based games. They do relatively well on mental ability (or intelligence) tests which have items on reasoning, pattern recognition, problem solving. The mental quality or ability that such tests measure is also called *scholastic aptitude* since this seems to help students to do well in their *studies* which are related to school subjects.

*We need to remember that the label ‘studies’ does not include learning in many areas which are seen as important for the holistic or well-rounded development of the child: art, music, dance, sports, drama, team work, caring for others, leadership, and so on.*

Obviously, students with a higher level of scholastic ability will perform better in many class activities and tests related to them than others, especially when knowing and remembering what is in prescribed texts and writing long answers are involved. But curriculum transaction today also includes more open-ended activities (not linked to a single ‘correct answer’): dialogues, dramatization of

themes, situations from stories and poems, creating displays/charts, sharing experiences outside school and so on. In this wider context of activities where written answers (to test questions) are only one component, those students with high scholastic aptitude will not automatically have any big advantage. So, we can state that the general level of scholastic ability of students does not influence their language learning in class in a strong and consistent way. This is especially true now, when communication skills are being emphasized rather than knowledge about language. Therefore, teachers should not simply assume that learners who get high or low grades in other subjects will perform similarly in the language class. The earlier discussion about prior learning and readiness is relevant here. Students who have not learnt what is needed as background for new learning will of course face difficulties. This is related to lack of opportunity to learn, *not* to low capacity to learn. While we should be happy about students who are doing well in studies, *we must be very careful not to judge others as low in scholastic ability without proper evidence. We should expect so called scholastically weak students also to do well—especially in the language area.*

### **b) Language Learning Aptitude**

We often come across people who have learnt a number of languages both at school and college and when they have travelled abroad. So, there is a popular idea that some people have a knack for languages, just like having a feel for music or dancing or being good with one's hands. In the second half of the last century the study of languages, especially foreign languages, began to increase—covering more languages and more students. Linguists and psychologists took up research on language aptitude, and two well known tests were developed: the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) of Carroll and Sapon (1959), and the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) of Pimsleur (1966). These tests have sections dealing with specific sub-skills like phonetic coding, grammatical sensitivity, sound discrimination, sound symbol association, short term memory after rote learning. *They do not look like language tests* at all, as they focus on some of the 'hidden' cognitive processes that underly the speaking or listening we normally do while using a language. The theory is that if a person gets high scores on these sections, s/he has basic abilities which are a big advantage when learning a new language. These tests were found to be fairly useful in identifying potentially good students of language(s) and those who found language study difficult. They were widely used especially in the USA for several years.

We are interested here in the nature of a basic aptitude for learning language, languages actually, which has implications for pedagogy. Here we find that the two tests have limitations. One is that they contain tasks (items) which look complicated and only someone who has been educated in formal school for about eight years would understand the instructions. The tests are meant for older learners, and so they do not give us any useful data about the 'language aptitude' of primary school children. Secondly, they were developed more than half a century ago. The approach to language instruction then emphasized drills and pattern practice, learning about the system (rules of grammar and pronunciation). Now, with much greater focus on meaning and participation in communicative activities, the processes and sub-skills involved in learning would be different. New aptitude tests need to be developed.

If we go back to what we noted about children's learning and learning capacity, we find there is a basic problem with the idea of aptitude. *All children learn to*

*speaking their home languages* long before they start formal school. There is no indication of different levels (low, average, high) of aptitude among children: everyone learns successfully. It is true that when the learning of reading and writing starts in school, there are always different success levels. This is the challenge we face. How can we make the teaching-learning of the written form of language more like the success story of learning to speak the home language? There is no scientific evidence that differences in aptitude for language are a factor in early learning at school. Anyway, our education policy commits us to help children learn *languages* — three in most cases. Aptitude is not a relevant or helpful idea for us. Later when, college level optional and advanced language courses come up, language aptitude test scores can help in choosing to study or not study languages as special subjects. It is in such a setting that the MLAT and LAB were most helpful.

### Check your progress 3

- 1) What is intelligence? Do children with scholastic ability/intelligence do well in all subjects?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) What are the implications of aptitude research for classroom teacher?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## 1.5.2 Learning Styles and Preferences

### c) Learning Styles

Educational psychologists studying the processes of learning have found that individuals seem to have different styles of learning. These are *not* linked to higher or lower levels of the capacity to learn. They are rather equally natural and effective ways of engaging cognitively with new experiences and ideas. The alternative styles are rather like being left-handed or right-handed, but they are not so sharply different or fixed. A student's typical learning style in class is an orientation or preference for how information and ideas are taken in and processed. But even these styles can and often do change over time, though only slowly. Also, students can have different styles for different types of subject matter or curricular activities. Learning styles are of relevance to us because they influence learning. If there is a match between the teaching style and the student's style, learning will be more comfortable and effective. A mismatch could result in obstacles to effective learning.

Several different ways of describing and categorizing styles have been proposed by various scholars. One survey found there were about 70 such models! Obviously, there is a lot of overlap, because many different words are used to talk about the same thing. We will look here only at a few interesting styles sets of differences that might be relevant when planning for teaching. This overview only provides a general background. Some of the interesting areas in which style differences have been identified are:

**i) *Sensory preference***

The word teaching is associated primarily with something the teacher provides or does - usually telling or presenting. Some *input* (received through the senses – listening, seeing and feeling) is central to teaching-learning experiences especially in relation to subject matter in the syllabus. Remember that the same message can be conveyed or presented in different ways. For instance, when we have to give someone directions for reaching a house from the station or bus stand, this can be done in different ways - using words mainly, or words and gestures or a diagram/map. Similarly, when teaching a lesson, the presentation could use different types of sensory input.

One difference among learners is in the way of ‘taking in’ information, i.e., which one suits them best. These are orientations or preferences for the mode of sensory input. The possibilities or options are: visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic.

*Visual* is based on seeing. Students with this orientation learn best from written statements (on the board or worksheets) and pictures, diagrams, models they can see.

*Auditory* is based on hearing. Spoken messages (like teacher talk) seem best for some students to learn.

*Tactile* (relating to touch) and *kinesthetic* (sense of moving body parts) are taken together. Some students learn best when they can touch and feel objects (especially models) or are themselves moving (as in demonstrations and role play).

Most teachers would say that they use all these ‘methods’ at different times during their lessons. And they would be right. The point here is that specific ways of presenting information can be chosen and used in a more planned manner after the teacher comes to know about individual students’ styles. This is especially useful when giving individual attention to students or organizing activity in pairs or small groups. Students also differ in the way they engage with or cognitively process the ‘inputs’ they receive. We now look at these differences in the way children learn.

**ii) *Whole or part focused learning***

Some learners tend to focus more on general ideas or the ‘big picture’, while others pay much more attention to the small details. This has also been described as the global versus sequential style of processing information. Some students learn better when the teacher presents and discusses general ideas and assigns related tasks; they may have a tendency to ‘switch off’ when a lot of time is spent on small details. But others may respond well to specifics and details, and feel somewhat lost when the focus is on abstract ideas.

This orientation is related to a broader factor called *field dependence* – *field independence*. Field dependent individuals are influenced by the context. For example, in a group where most people favour one opinion in a set of possibilities they are more likely to agree with others. Those who are more field independent are better able to see basic facts or arguments by themselves. This does not mean that they are independent thinkers or misfits. Their style of thinking is more analytical, that is all.

### iii) *Inductive vs. deductive learning*

Inductive learning occurs when a body of specific facts or data is given and effort is directed to finding pattern(s) or *inferring* a general principle. Tasks involving trying out possible explanations – exploring without knowing beforehand what is the best thing to do—involves such learning. Grammar is often taught inductively in deductive learning, usually a rule or principle is given to begin with, and the discussion is on its implications and applications. Many problems in mathematics and science involve sets of deductions. Here too it is found that some students are more comfortable and learn better with the first of these approaches. They seem to enjoy finding things out for themselves – learning by discovery. Other students are more comfortable when principles and rules are stated, and the challenge is to understand and apply them.

### iv) *Convergent thinking vs. divergent thinking*

This dimension is related to the distinction sometimes made between ‘intelligence’ and ‘creativity’. Psychologists who have studied the way people deal with problems that require thinking and analysis have found two broad approaches. The more common one is to analyze the problem logically using relevant knowledge from mathematics or biology or economics, and then *proceed systematically*—step by step towards the solution. There is a gradual progress of narrowing down—or converging—to the solution. This is rather similar to the deductive approach mentioned above. Some people do not go directly to the problem *as given*. They will look at it from different angles and sometimes even try to change or reformulate it. This can lead to unusual or creative suggestions. The process here is one of opening up or widening the discussion. That is why the term divergent is used. Many innovations or discoveries in science and new theories have come from people who were divergent in their thinking. However, both approaches are useful and important. Having convergent and divergent thinking students in the same class is a great resource. The problems introduced in class should allow both types to try their approaches and share their experiences.

These learning styles were mentioned here mainly to illustrate what they are. There are many others. Note, that there are no ‘good’ or ‘bad’ styles. What we have seen are equally useful and effective *alternative* ways of learning. If teachers can organize some aspects of their teaching to match the styles of different students, this could facilitate better learning. To enhance the chances of such matching of styles, teachers need to add more variety to their teaching styles—by including more types of presentations and activities in their lesson plans. They need not know all the names and definitions of several learning styles. Once they have the basic concept, as they interact with successive batches of learners, they will recognize different learning styles. This knowledge can guide them when planning their teaching.

#### d) **Personality dispositions –feelings, emotions and social interactions**

The term personality is a familiar one. When we talk about and describe individuals, we always say something about their *personality* - their typical *ways of behaving* in their daily lives and especially when relating to others. This is something in addition to and different from their abilities and skills, achievements, status and so on. When students write about ‘my favourite teacher’, ‘my hero’ these personal qualities are emphasized. These are fairly stable qualities or characteristics of a person (referred to as *traits*), and can be seen even in children. The study of personality is one of the major sub-fields of psychology, and involves many different theories and models. Several personality dimensions have been proposed. We will look at a few of them here to get a sense of what personality factors are. They are of interest because they seem to influence learning, but in a different manner than the more cognitive factors we just looked at.

One widely mentioned list of personality dimensions (called the big five) - aspects on which individuals differ - are the following

##### **Extraversion - Introversion**

A person near the extraversion end is generally active, energetic, outgoing, talkative and friendly.

##### **Openness – Closed Mindedness**

A person high on openness is likely to be curious, imaginative, original and has wide interests.

##### **Conscientiousness – Undirectedness**

A person high on conscientiousness behaves in an organized, efficient manner and is thorough and reliable in getting things done.

##### **Agreeableness – Antagonism**

An agreeable person is generally good natured, kind, trusting, generous, modest and appreciative

##### **Neuroticism – Stability**

A person high on neuroticism is often anxious and insecure, gets upset easily and shows signs of self-pity.

This is only an outline. The descriptions above are not at all complete. They give us a general sense of what psychologists treat as aspects of *personality*. We must note carefully that we cannot put people (especially children) into such categories. Even psychologists who conduct elaborate tests are careful about this. What is important here is that these personality dispositions are fairly stable –almost natural qualities of a person. They are not expressions of conscious and deliberate decisions to act in particular ways—they are like all established habits one does not think about. Some dispositions of children (see examples below) seem to be positive for classroom participation and others less so. The teacher must remember that a child with a certain disposition is *not doing anything deliberately*.

Let us consider personality related differences among children. Look at the examples below of different types of learners we might see in a class:

- an extroverted child who is active and talkative and likes to be interacting with others

- a child who is more introverted and does not participate actively in group work,
- a child who is anxious and gets easily discouraged,
- a child who seems inattentive and careless about work and does not complete assignments,
- a child who seems keenly interested in new ideas and activities and enjoys engaging with them

We should recognize that no such ‘type’ is good or bad in itself. Also, as noted already, these ways of behaving are not conscious choices made by individuals. Teachers should appreciate that they represent children’s habitual styles or predispositions, and accept them without judging them. It is true that in the conventional classroom, some types seem not well adjusted. Scolding or putting pressure on a child whose behaviour seems ‘negative’ will not help. As far as possible they should be involved in other activities. There are spaces within the curriculum where a shy and withdrawn child or even the child who seems careless is not a ‘problem’. Remember that a high-pressure competitive classroom is not the ideal, though it is commonly found. The classroom climate can be changed. As teachers understand such predispositions of children and work sensitively with them, these children too can learn successfully; they may also contribute to others’ learning in small ways. And to repeat an earlier point, changes in aspects of personality can occur, but only slowly and based on a lot of supportive interaction.

#### Some further dimensions of personality

Another aspect of personality which is fairly easy to see is *self-esteem*. This is related to confidence and a capacity to accept challenges, take risks and risk failure without much anxiety. A person with high self-esteem is able to accept criticism, and is not worried about being unpopular at times. Teachers and peers are fortunate when there are such students in class. There will also be others low on self esteem. We can be sure that they were not born that way. They must have been through many negative experiences in the past both in and out of school. Using the many types of situations and activities of the total curriculum to provide such children positive experiences is not very difficult for teachers using the support of peers.

Some people have a marked tendency to be strongly influenced by the opinions of those around them. This disposition is called *social conformity*. While all members of society are expected to generally follow group norms and obey rules and so on, a certain degree of independence and thinking for oneself is also treated as normal and healthy. A child who seems always to watch what others do and say, and tries to follow them and ‘not be different’ would be high on the social conformity dimension. This is not the same as low ability and confidence. Such a student might be getting quite good grades, but may not participate in group activities where each child has to contribute his/her own ideas and opinions, and may try to avoid tasks calling for innovation.

We have reviewed various dimensions on which there are individual differences among students covering both the cognitive and social – emotional dimensions. We will now look at a model which brings many of these and certain other qualities into a comprehensive picture.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) List the categories of cognitive styles mentioned. According to your experience in the classroom, what are the cognitive styles which best bring about second language learning? You may take up case histories of particular students in answering this question.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Have you ever thought of your students’ personality dispositions? Go through the register and mark them according to the categories mentioned. Then make an analysis of these categories and the language learning ability of each student.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**1.5.3 Multiple Intelligences**

A very interesting new discussion about differences among children with implications for their progress as learners started about thirty years ago, when the psychologist Howard Gardner presented his Theory of Multiple Intelligences (in 1983). In this scheme there are seven *intelligences*, and later on he added two more:

*Logico-mathematical, linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, spatial, inter-personal and intra-personal.* Later an eighth one - naturalistic - was added. Still later he added the ninth one-*Existential*. Traditionally we thought of ‘intelligence’ as related only to logical thinking and problem solving. Gardner says that having a feel for words (images, rhymes, striking expressions, multiple meanings) is also a form of intelligence. Similarly, the powerful sense of one’s own body (which dancers and gymnasts have) is related to intelligence. The basic capacity which allows some persons to become good painters, sculptors, designers of visuals is spatial intelligence. It is easy to see what the names musical and inter-personal point to. Intra-personal intelligence is what allows people (even children) to be happy in themselves (accept their strengths and weaknesses, preserve a high self-concept). Some persons seem to have a feel for the many things in the natural world - living things, water, minerals. They not only enjoy nature but can participate with understanding and sensitivity in activities linked to the environment. Existential intelligence refers to the sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence, such as the meaning of life, our place in the universe and questions of life and death.



We will not go into more details about multiple intelligences. The significant idea here is that scholastic aptitude is *only one* among the special aptitudes' individuals have. In fact, other psychologists had suggested even before Gardner that 'social intelligence' and 'emotional intelligence' should also be recognized as special aptitudes some persons might have. The principle that there are different types of aptitudes can be linked to what we noted about the potential for learning that all children have. We see now that often there could also be some special aptitude, which means that knowledge and skill can develop to a level of excellence. Children in schools and classrooms will have different profiles of strengths and interests. We need as teachers to be aware of this diversity and develop the capacity to recognize special aptitudes. But we must be careful not to hastily brand children as strong in one or two areas and weak in all others. We need to nurture their special potentials within our basic commitment to promote the all-round development of each child. No learning opportunity should be held back from any child.

### Check Your Progress 5

- 1) "Knowing individual Learner's learning style can help the language teacher devise learning strategies to enhance their performance..." State what the teacher should do to exploit multiple intelligences of the students in the classroom to an optimum extent.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

## 1.6 FLEXIBILITY IN THE CURRICULUM: VALUING DIVERSITY AND PROMOTING AUTONOMY

---

In the sections above we have looked at some of the ways in which individuals differ. The focus has been on individuals as persons - who have their own thoughts, feelings, hopes, needs and so on. The focus has been on these psychological aspects, which lie beyond the more obvious physical ones such as sex, age, physical development, health. The survey has been brief and has covered only some of the many possible dimensions of individual differences. Even so we have gained a sense of how vast and rich human diversity can be. A class of 35 or even a small group of 10 has children whose unique personalities will lead to different patterns of learning. This diversity can be seen as a resource now, and we need to try and adapt the 'standard curriculum' to suit individual needs. This is a big challenge of course, but the new approach to the curriculum also has a source of support. This is the principle that the child relates ideas coming as inputs in lessons to her/his life outside the school and thus becomes an active co-creator of new knowledge. This knowledge will be personal and therefore different for different children. In other words, we do not have to try to make every child in a class learn exactly the same things, in the same manner at the same rate which was the underlying principle of the traditional curriculum. In a traditional

classroom, the given syllabus was covered following the required or recommended method. Individual teachers tried to give so called weak students some special help. Those who could not meet the requirements ‘failed’ and dropped out of the system and were forgotten. The RTE made drastic change in this process. Every child had the “right to education of quality” through the elementary stage (till Class VIII), which meant no failures, no dropouts. Obviously, the education in this framework has to be flexible in many ways. It is necessary in a public education system to have an official syllabus and a prescribed textbook. These can have some elements of flexibility, but the real flexibility and adaptation occurs in the day to day transactions in class. This too is not something the teacher does following a detailed lesson plan with many parallel segments – but rather a process based on the joint activity of the teacher and the learners.

Flexible classroom transaction as described above involves learners’ active participation. Active participation is not only doing what is asked for in exercises and tasks which is typically the same for all students. It means importantly that learners *contribute* their ideas and suggestions, ask questions to keep the activity going—and not only give answers to questions already raised by the teacher or in the textbook. This points to initiative and independence on the part of students who are members of a team working together (with their different skills and styles) for the benefit of all. Such cooperative activity is an opportunity both to know about others’ talents, styles and needs and to respect them.

#### *Learner independence and autonomy*

These two terms are often used interchangeably. Both point to the capacity to learn on one’s own – without relying heavily on the teacher’s inputs and guidance. Such a capacity is seen as an asset in the broad setting of a learner centred education. It is especially desirable for students of a second or foreign language who do not normally use this language for social communication outside class. Developing communication skills in a second or foreign language will be greatly aided by the learners’ own efforts to extend contact with the language by using or practicing it outside class. The typical five sessions a week of classroom contact can only provide a base. Much more effort by the learner is needed for effective skill development. Even intensive courses of 100 or 150 hours spread over about 6 weeks cannot in any way be complete. So, the learner’s own efforts are important.

Another perspective on learner independence has come from the distance and open learning sectors. For courses in this mode there are no time tabled ‘teaching sessions. Well designed course material is provided – in print and audio-visual media. The student has to find a suitable place and time to ‘study’ –keeping to a schedule of 15 (for example) hours a week. Such courses are thus based on self-managed or self-directed learning. The effort and discipline have to come from within. We can see here that the personal quality of independence or autonomy is important – for all areas of study, not only language. It is also true that the use of modern technology (ICT) in education is linked to modes of learning which are different from students and live-teacher interaction. This is *not* to say that the classroom has no importance any more, but rather that classroom-based instruction has to be complemented as well as supplemented. Here again the learner’s initiative is called upon.

- 1) What was the difference between the traditional curriculum and the present-day curriculum? What is learner autonomy?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) How do you make your students more independent in acquiring the second language?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

### 1.7 LET US SUM UP

---

In this unit we have made a survey of the various ways in which individuals differ, focusing on those characteristics that might influence how they learn. We saw that two negative factors the teacher often encounters – low readiness to deal with subject matter and low interest and motivation—are caused largely by what *happens to* a student in terms of external conditions. They are not fixed characteristics of the individual and so *can be changed* by providing appropriate stimulation and support.

We saw that there are differences among children in scholastic aptitude and language learning aptitude, but we also realized that the impact of these factors on learning –especially communication skills development - is not very large. So even in a large class with an apparent gap between strong and weak learners (high marks and low marks in previous tests), there would be many activities that all can participate in and benefit from.

We also looked more closely at a few selected aspects of personality: the typical (in a sense habitual) way in which individuals think, feel, behave. These qualities have nothing to do with the capacity to learn, but they can influence the ways in which learners participate in curriculum transaction. This influence covers both what they take in from inputs and what they contribute. The interesting aspects of diversity lie in these personal characteristics. The well-known model of multiple intelligences brings the cognitive and social, emotional and bodily aspects of personality together as possible areas of special aptitudes. It is important to recognize these qualities, and make instruction flexible. Including a variety of techniques and activities will ensure that more learning styles have a match in the curriculum. Finally, we noted the relevance of learner autonomy in education and especially for communication skills.

---

## 1.8 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Readiness refers to the receptivity of a learner (in terms of ability, attitude and interest) to learn new items. All of us have had experience of some students finding a particular topic ‘difficult’. This is because there is a mismatch between the teaching plan for a particular topic and the students’ ability to assimilate and understand it. In other words, some students lack readiness for a particular topic not because of low learning capacity but because of inadequate understanding/knowledge required for the topic.

A student who shows lack of relevant knowledge in any subject must be given specific planned help. This will allow her/him to catch up with the others. If sufficient help is provided, before a topic is taught, a student’s readiness problem might slowly disappear.

- 2) Read Section 1.3 for the answer.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Here are some clues:
  - Subject is too difficult
  - There is no real help from teachers or friends
  - Sometimes other students make fun of such students, leading to low self-esteem.

Teachers can:

- provide intensive individual attention to those students.
- adapt the syllabus and materials to some extent.
- be sympathetic and sensitive to these students.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Intelligence is primarily concerned with reasoning, pattern recognition and problem solving.

Students with higher level of scholastic ability perform better in many class activities. However, they may not perform as well in more open-ended activities such as - dialogues, dramatization of themes, situations from stories and poems, creating displays/charts, sharing experiences from outside school and so on.

- 2) There is no scientific evidence to suggest that aptitude is a factor in early learning at school. Aptitude is not a relevant or helpful idea for teachers at the school level.

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) A List of categories of cognitive style mentioned:
  - Whole or part focus learning (field dependence – field independence)
  - Inductive vs. Deductive learning
  - Convergent thinking vs. Divergent thinking

- 2) Do it according to your own experience.

### Check Your Progress 5

- 1) Here are some hints:
- Teacher should be aware of the diversity of the children, their strengths and interests.
  - Teacher should recognize special aptitude of the children and nurture their special potential.

### Check Your Progress 6

- 1) The traditional concept of curriculum was the standard curriculum which was constructed by so-called experts. The new approach to the curriculum involves the child as well. The child thus becomes an active co-creator of new knowledge. In a traditional curriculum the given syllabus is covered by following a recommended method to be used by the teacher.

Learner autonomy refers to a student's ability to set appropriate learning goals and take charge of his or her own learning. However, autonomous learners are dependent upon teachers to create and maintain learning environments that support the development of learner autonomy.

- 2) Develop communication skills in the second language so that students can use it for social communication outside the classroom as well as independent academic activities.

Encourage online learning using ICT.

---

## 1.9 SUGGESTED READING

---

Gass, Susan, M. *Input, Interaction, and the Second Language Learner*. Routledge, UK, 2017

---

## UNIT 2 THE UNREACHED LEARNER

---

### Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The Underprivileged Learners
  - 2.2.1 Who are the Underprivileged Learners?
  - 2.2.2 What Makes Them Underprivileged?
  - 2.2.3 Characteristics of Underprivileged Learners
- 2.3 Underprivileged Learners and the System of Education
  - 2.3.1 A Brief History of the Education of the Underprivileged
  - 2.3.2 Some Interventions
- 2.4 Teaching English to the Underprivileged Learners
  - 2.4.1 The Need for English Amongst the Underprivileged
  - 2.4.2 Problems Faced by Underprivileged Learners in Learning English
  - 2.4.3 How to Help the Underprivileged Learners
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Hints to Check Your Progress
- 2.7 Suggested Readings

---

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

---

This Unit will enable you to:

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

---

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

---

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

Education has an empowering effect for it enables people to develop a critical questioning attitude towards society, government, gender and cultural stereotypes.

These critical thinking skills are well developed amongst the middle-class learners or learners from affluent homes for they are provided ample opportunities in the school to address these skills.

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

This unit will address the needs of these learners whom we shall term ‘unreached’, ‘disadvantaged learners’ or ‘underprivileged learners. These terms have been used interchangeably.

---

## **2.2 THE UNDERPRIVILEGED LEARNERS**

---

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

- 1) Have you met learners who are disadvantaged?
- 2) What problems do they face in learning?
- 3) Are they treated differently from other learners?

### **2.2.1 Who are the Underprivileged Learners?**

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

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

### **2.2.2 What Makes Them Underprivileged?**

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

#### **i) Poverty**

Poverty is a major cause of disadvantage and backwardness. Due to lack of means such learners are deprived of many experiences and opportunities. They may have working parents who have very little time to interact or talk to them. Moreover, the language repertoire of the parents can be very limited. Hence the

experiences that a pre-school child requires to become a good communicator, reader or writer are missing. Emergent experiences such as conversation with parents and those around, letter knowledge, sound knowledge, access to books and toys, stories and rhymes and songs, numerical knowledge, which are a part of any middle class child's life, are missing in the lives of these children. We can say that they are under-stimulated.

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

#### **ii) Discrimination and exploitation**

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

#### **iii) Geographical or locational disadvantage**

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

#### **iv) Culturally disadvantaged**

The 'culturally disadvantaged' may belong to ethnic minorities, certain demographic groups like the slum dwellers or tribes untouched by education. They have poor stimulus for learning and their exposure to even the regional language is negligible.

### **2.2.3 Characteristics of Underprivileged Learners**

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



limited interaction with parents, who are battling with the basic problems of living. But at the same time life provides them many experiences that make them emotionally mature, hardworking and responsible. These are their hallmarks.

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

**i) Low cognitive abilities**

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

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

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

**ii) Poor linguistic ability**

The underprivileged learners lack experiences that generate ideas about what they can talk or write. In addition to the experiential deficiency they often have poorly-developed verbal patterns. This deficiency in language is caused due to inadequate social interaction and it comes in the way of understanding what the teacher says in class or what the text contains. Since the standard language is used, the learner cannot often fully comprehend what is spoken or written.

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

**iii) Low self-esteem**

Underprivileged learners feel that they are not able to cope with the content and the language in the classroom. Moreover, the textbooks are written more for the middle class learners and hardly have any representation about their lives is present in these books. This leads to a negative attitude about self, their culture,

people and language. There is an implicit segregation as the students of other social classes, castes and races do not mix with them. This subtle rejection also contributes to their low self-esteem.

**iv) Involvement Gap**

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

**v) Poor ability to read or write**

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

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

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

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Who would you call an underprivileged learner?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2) What are the causes of their deprivation?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

## **2.3 UNDERPRIVILEGED LEARNERS AND THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION**

---

### **2.3.1 A Brief History of the Education of the Underprivileged**

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

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

**i) Isolation**

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

**ii) Assimilation**

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

**iii) Integration**

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

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

**2.3.2 Some Interventions**

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

and an unfriendly attitude towards these learners which either led to the neglect of these learners or a simplification of the content and assignments, making them repetitive and boring.

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

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

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

### **i) Curriculum**

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

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

- Inclusion of topics of interest or familiarity for the underprivileged learners
- Reflection of the lives and culture of the underprivileged as equal contributors to society

- Removal of biases in favour of the privileged
- Content should aim at fostering a positive attitude towards their lives and culture.
- Illustration could include tribal art and styles that represent their culture and lifestyles
- Stimulating but linguistically simple questions to help them develop their cognitive and analytical skills.

## ii) Teaching Methods

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

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

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

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

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

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

## iii) Evaluation procedures

A way of overcoming the problem of drop out was the government policy of non-detention at the primary level. It was understood that the teachers would

ensure that 80% of the students would master 80% of the content and skill so that no one is detained. But this was misunderstood as a 'pass all' policy, as a result of which, learners who had not obtained even 10% of learning were promoted. On the one hand the teachers did not work with the learners to ensure learning and on the other hand the learners lost all motivation, comfortable in the thought that merely the basic required attendance would take them to the next class. This only helped in widening the gap in knowledge and as the learners reached the higher classes they found it difficult to conceptualize or analyse, not having mastered the basic concepts. They also were deficient in the skills of taking the tests which were of only the paper pencil kind and summative in nature.

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

This will require a lot of teacher preparation not only in evaluation procedures but also in removal of biases from the testing procedures. Since the evaluation is holistic it would be essential to make the tests relevant to the context of the learners. Forty percent of the evaluation would be conducted by the teacher with whom the learners have been working closely, hoping thereby that the element of bias and unfair evaluation would be eliminated. This is because the teacher himself or herself would be the evaluator and not an outside agency, who has no knowledge of the needs and problems of different learners.

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

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

#### **iv) Education through the language and dialect of underprivileged learners**

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

language may prove to be difficult to the underprivileged learner who is perhaps exposed to only the dialect of home and community.

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

**v) Teacher Preparation**

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

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

- Using a variety of methods to convey a single idea
- Addressing the needs of the target group and overcoming biases
- Making the topic interesting and relevant
- Developing the skills of reading and writing amongst learners with 'experiential deficiency'
- Removing bias in the material, if any
- Treating all learners alike and encouraging the underprivileged children to perform to the best of their capabilities

**Check Your Progress 2**

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



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

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

## 2.4 TEACHING ENGLISH TO THE UNDERPRIVILEGED LEARNERS

---

### Before You Read

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

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

Some similar problems exist in our own country in relation to learning English, even though it is present everywhere in the environment in some form or the other. The underprivileged communities are disadvantaged in relation to the majority culture in our country. This is the culture of the middle class which has a larger and more sustained exposure to English through various sources like the environment and the media. English enjoys a prominent place in this culture, either as a subject of study, a medium of instruction or a source of information.

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

### 2.4.1 The Need for English amongst the Underprivileged

As we mentioned earlier, English is very much a part of our lives and is found everywhere right from the school books to street and shop names, from public directions and notices to labels and instructions, from industries to the banks.

English plays a major role in education and is a subject of study at the primary level in most of the states. In many schools it is the medium of instruction and higher education becomes better accessible with the knowledge of English. Technology today has made our lives simpler but in many instances is driven by English. Much of the information on the Internet is in English.

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

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

### **2.4.2 Problems Faced by Underprivileged Learners in Learning English**

#### **i) Fear of English as a subject of study**

English by its very nature is very different from the Indian languages. For instance, English does not have one letter-one sound correspondence and spelling and sounds do not always follow a uniform pattern. Moreover, the syntax of English is different from the Indian languages. In English the verb occupies the medial position—Rita plays football; in most Indian languages the verb comes at the end—Rita football khelti hai. These two characteristics of the English language make learning complicated and difficult for the underprivileged learners. In addition, English is associated with the elite culture and this creates a sense of awe and fear amongst the underprivileged learners. Textbooks in English contains material which does not belong to the Indian milieu and is alien to the underprivileged learner who has to grapple not only with the language but with concepts as well. As we have said earlier, the textbook has no representation of their lives and culture which further alienates them.

#### **ii) Language load and poor reading skills**

Often the underprivileged learners speak a non-standard variety of language or dialect. They already feel the load of learning to read in the standard language which is often the regional language. In addition, they have to grapple with English which is very different from the languages they know. This pressure of languages on the underprivileged learners creates fear, gaps in learning and alienation due to which they lose all interest and motivation. In addition, because of their inadequate exposure to languages and texts in their childhood these learners develop poor literacy skills. As a result, they are unable to use the knowledge resources which are part of emergent literacy. In brief, they are unable to read a lot of material which is available in English and much of this material may be essential for day-to-day survival.

#### **iii) A feeling of alienation created by the learning materials**

It has been earlier said that the textbooks and other learning materials are often written and chosen with an average learner in mind – who normally belongs to

the middle class and who has the required experiences and background knowledge to handle the curriculum. Underprivileged learners feel inadequate and isolated when topics of which they have no knowledge are taken up for reading or writing tasks.

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

#### **iv) Low expectations from the teacher**

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

### **2.4.3 How to Help the Underprivileged Learners**

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

#### **i) Mentoring the learners**

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

#### **ii) Introduction to critical thinking skills**

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

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

**iii) Selection of relevant topics**

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

**iv) Adequate Scaffolding and support**

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

**v) Use Mother-tongue based Multilingualism**

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

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

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

**Check Your Progress 3**

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

## 2.5 LET US SUM UP

---

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

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

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

---

## 2.6 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The term ‘underprivileged’ is used to refer to the disadvantaged section of people who are poor and socially backward or geographically isolated. They lack proper health, education or skill. They may be poor, deprived culturally

or living away from the main society. They know only their own language and may not be able to communicate properly.

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

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The underprivileged learners would get an opportunity to study and work with better informed and skilled teachers. The atmosphere in the elite school is very stimulating and this would help in the overall growth of these learners. They would get an opportunity to get a fair deal in life.
- 2) A conscious attempt needs to be made to make the curriculum not only attractive but also challenging for the underprivileged learners. Topics of interest and familiarity for the underprivileged learners which reflect their lives and culture should be included in the curriculum. There should be no

bias in favour of the privileged and the content should foster a positive attitude towards the unreached. At the same time, the content should not be diluted too much under the impression that they may not be able to handle it. It should be challenging and mentally stimulating.

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

### Check Your Progress 3

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

---

## 2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

---

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

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

Garcia, Georgia Earnest et al. "Reading Instruction and Educational

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

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

Quality education for the underprivileged, SMILE project

Williams, Brandy. How the Education System Fails Underprivileged Students, Twitter: [www.twitter.com/@DaWriterChik](https://www.twitter.com/@DaWriterChik)



ignou  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY



---

## **UNIT 3 THE LEARNER WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

---

### **Structure**

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Learner with Language Problems
- 3.3 Speech and Language Difficulties
- 3.4 Reading Difficulties
- 3.5 Difficulties with Writing
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Hints to Check Your Progress
- 3.8 Suggested Readings

---

### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

---

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

- identify major causes of language-based learning problems;
- list the kinds of intervention required of the teacher;
- adopt or adapt strategies to help the special learners; and
- suggest follow-up action to meet the educational needs of the special learners.

---

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

---

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

---

### **3.2 THE LEARNER WITH LANGUAGE PROBLEMS**

---

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

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

- 1) Description of the child's functioning
  - Description of the child's strengths and weaknesses

- Factors in the child’s environment
  - Relevant aspects of the child’s history
- 2) Intervention aimed at
- General areas of development
  - Specific areas of weakness or gaps in skills acquisition which impede the child’s progress
  - Methods and approaches

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

***Basic principles of teaching the learning-disabled child***

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

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

***Some common deficits noticed amongst learners***

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

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

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

**Check Your Progress 1**

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

.....

.....

.....

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

### **3.3 SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES**

---

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

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

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

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

#### ***The Classification of Speech and Language Problem***

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

The areas of speech and language that are mainly affected according to Garmen 1980 are: Levels of linguistic analysis of sounds (phonetics and phonology), grammar (morphology and syntax) and meaning (semantics). Crystal (1980)

classifies speech and language problems on the basis of reception and production. A child may have difficulty in reception due to deafness, partial hearing or inability to discriminate between sounds. Difficulties in processing language in disorders like aphasia (unable to understand and express), agnosia, dyspraxia and dysarthria (speech problem), language production, lack of fluency, deficit in voice and articulation need to be addressed by a language pathologist.

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

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

### ***Difficulties in Auditory Discrimination***

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

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

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

- Same or different: This is an activity in which the child has to say whether the words in a pair are the same or different (park/part, pat/pad, crane/crane, bat/pat). In the sequence, the number of pairs having different words is more. So if a child chooses to say 'different' she will be more successful.
- Listening games: Child listens to a sequence of sounds and repeats, listens and notices the common sound.

- Phonic activity games: saying words beginning or ending with the same sound.
- Rhyming Games: producing rhyming words.
- Alliteration: saying fun sentences that use alliteration.
- Word families: saying words with similar letters that represent the same or different sounds.

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

### ***Developmental Language Disorder***

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

Children with language disorder display the following behaviours/symptoms:

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

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

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

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

### ***Interventions***

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

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

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

### ***Speech Problems***

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

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

Speech problems can be of:

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

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

### ***Helping children who have difficulties with the voice***

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

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

### ***Helping Children Overcome Stuttering and Stammering***

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

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

- An abnormal amount of segment, syllable, word or phrase repetition - 'the pol-pol-policeman' 'the c-c-cater-p-pillar. Certain sounds like fricatives (f, v, s) and plosives (p, k, d) present the most difficulty.
- Obstruction of the airflow - referred to as blocking.
- Abnormal prolongation of sound segments, as in 'f-f-fish'.

- Introduction of extra words or sounds – ‘um’ or ‘tut’.
- Erratic stress patterns in words, mainly due to very hesitant speech.
- Words left unfinished.
- Awkward circumlocutions in order to avoid saying certain words which produce difficulty.

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

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

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

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

### ***Remedial Measures***

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

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

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

### ***Problems with Articulation***

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

The most difficult sounds to reproduce are : ‘z’, ‘th’ as in ‘the’ and ‘thing’, ‘v’, ‘j’, ‘c’ as in ceiling, ‘s’ as in sausage, ‘r’ and ‘l’. Even pronouncing ‘k’ and ‘g’ in

the final position is difficult for some children.

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

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

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

Meanwhile, you as a teacher can do the following:

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

**Check Your Progress 2**

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

3) What are the major difficulties in auditory discrimination?

.....

.....

.....

.....



4) Mention a few symptoms that indicate language disorder.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

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

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

### 3.4 READING DIFFICULTIES

---

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

Reading difficulty can be classified broadly into the following categories:

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

#### ***Reading Backwardness***

Reading backwardness may be caused by the following:

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

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

### Specific reading difficulties and their remediation

#### a) Visual-motor difficulties

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## b) Auditory-Verbal and Language Difficulties

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

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

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

Other measures that can be taken are:

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

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

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

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

### c) **Problems with higher order reading skills**

Auditory and phonetic skills as well as well developed vocabulary are all important for reading. At the outset the young reader largely used grapho-phonemic cues like looking at spelling and recalling word families when guessing unknown words. As the reader grows more proficient she relies more on understanding of the context to puzzle out unknown words.

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

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

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

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

### **Remedial measures**

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

be gaps where more than one alternative is possible and children can justify their choices, compare with the original and comment upon the difference.

Yet, in spite of a plethora of activities discussed and suggested to remediate reading difficulty, it is not possible to make definitive statements recommending specific methods for particular reading difficulties.

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

**Check Your Progress 3**

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

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- 2) How would you identify reading backwardness?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

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

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

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

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

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

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

### 3.5 DIFFICULTIES WITH WRITING

---

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

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

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

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

#### *Difficulty in planning and selection of ideas*

In the initial stages' learners are expected to copy words and phrases in blanks from a box in a highly controlled manner. Planning and coordination are not required much in classes 1 and 2. Difficulties will become evident when the learner is expected to do some guided or free writing which involves coordination of planning, sentence structure and spelling. Writing tasks like writing stories, letters, describing personal things or writing about personal experience may show evidence of writing difficulties.

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

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

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

### ***Concrete-description Level***

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

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

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

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

### ***Concrete-imaginative Level***

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

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

### ***Abstract-descriptive Level***

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

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

### ***Abstract-imaginative Level***

This is a sophisticated level and only a few students of the primary school can attain it. However, children can be made to work collaboratively and develop a story with the following guidelines. They can use the original plot, create characters, create a situation and narrate it in a fairly interesting manner.

The story should have:

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

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

**Difficulties with grammatical structure**

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

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

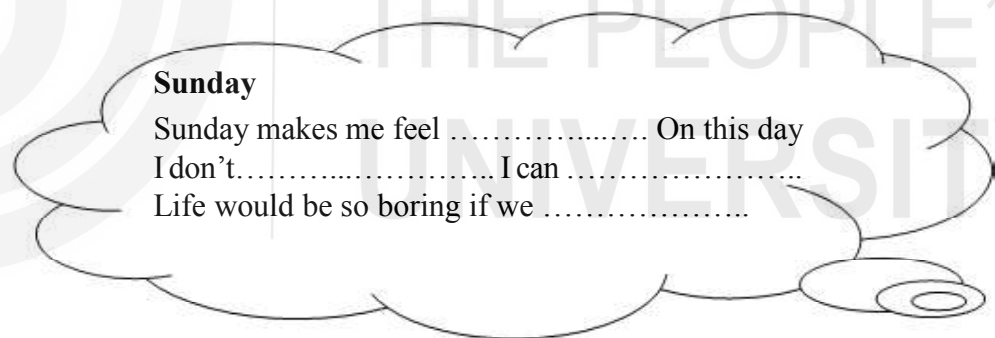
- First encourage them to create clear and interesting sentences orally through discussion and then transfer them onto writing.
- Use topics that interest the child so that s/he is encouraged to talk about it before putting it down on paper
- Practice in meaningful discourse.

Here is an example.

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

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

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



Here is an example.

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

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

**Difficulties with Handwriting**

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



areas in the brain and the frontal cortex which is responsible for attention, short term memory tasks, planning and motivation.

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

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

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

### **Remedial measures**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Check Your Progress 4**

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

.....  
.....



---

## 3.6 LET US SUM UP

---

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

---

## 3.7 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

### Check Your Progress 1

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

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

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

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The common indicators that a seven year old child's language has developed normally are:
  - can make grammatically correct sentences.
  - can articulate all the sounds of the language (home language).
  - is able to talk, expressing ideas in sentences.
  - is able to use negatives while speaking.
- 2) The three categories of problems that a teacher may come across are:
  - receptive difficulties: unable to catch sounds (due to hearing defect) or discriminate between sounds.

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

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Dyslexic learner is of normal intelligence with adequate stimulus, but is unable to read. A backward learner is one who has no stimulus to reading because of non-enriched home environment which is common in poor households.
- 2) Through observation, tests and activities and noticing if the child:
- confuses between similar looking words and reading a mirror image.
  - whether the child has left-right awareness of hand.

- unable to associate letter with sound.
- gets confused when confronted with words with irregular spelling.
- is reluctant to read.

3) Children with visual motor difficulties:

- have problems in visual sequencing and cannot distinguish between reversed and non-reversed words.
- while reading use sound clues.
- cannot tell with closed eyes how many fingers the teacher is touching.
- cannot draw figures in correct orientation.
- may fuse letters while reading (close as dose).
- often lose their place while reading.

The teacher can organise activities in which the child:

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

The teacher can also:

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

4) Audio-verbal difficulties:

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

Measures that a teacher can undertake are:

- teaching the child to match sounds
- teaching the position of the tongue while producing the sounds
- using word chains in which one letter of the word is changed each time

- using rhyming games and encouraging children to supply a word rhyming the word that the teacher says
- sound discrimination activities
- rhyming activities using pictures or plastic letters
- teaching children to tap the pattern of words and rhythms on the desk
- teaching word families - words which have similar spelling to help them decode them
- training them in producing sounds with sound blends

5) Difficulties associated with higher order reading skills:

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

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

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

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) Children face problems of writing at the age of 8-9 years when they begin to write composition. They face problems of:
  - cognition- thinking of and selecting ideas
  - language- using language to express the ideas
  - spelling and grammar (sentence structure)
  - punctuation
- 2) The mental processes involved in writing are:
  - selection of ideas
  - planning and sequencing of ideas
  - expressing ideas in words and sentences
  - using mechanics of writing
  - motor skills of handwriting
- 3) The four levels of planning are:
  - i) **concrete-descriptive**: child can verbalize ideas orally but is unable to write them down. Can be helped with suggestions regarding words and sentences and encouraged to write words and phrases

- ii) **concrete-imaginative**: child can write phrases and sentences looking at pictures and say what is happening and predict what will happen next. Can be encouraged to think of a story or sequence using pictures and create characters
- iii) **abstract-descriptive**: can look at pictures in a sequence and based on them develop a story and create characters on their own, but still needs a stimulus of some kind-verbal or visual. Can be encouraged to think of original ideas based on experiences and write the narration
- iv) **abstract-imaginative**: able to think, plan and write narration on an original basis, creates characters and situation
- 4) A teacher can help a child to overcome difficulty in writing through the following:
- oral discussions on a topic or situation
  - use of stimuli-verbal or/and visual
  - sequence of pictures
  - motivation
  - suggestions
- 5) The measures to help with problems of grammar include:
- discussions to encourage oral expression and use of appropriate grammatical structures
  - use of topics that interest the students
  - encouraging children to talk about the topics before sitting down to write
  - provide grammatical input
  - provide completion exercise to practice syntax and grammatical structures
  - picture stories with missing dialogues of characters in bubbles
- 6) The measures to improve handwriting are:
- pre-writing activities
  - allowing child to feel and trace plastic letters
  - observing their own hand movement
  - tracing, copying and writing on the black board

---

### 3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

---

Bereiter, C. (1980). Development in Writing. In Gregg, L. W. and Steinberg, E.R., *Cognitive Processes in writing*. Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum, pp. 73-75

Harding, L. (1986) *Learning Disabilities in the Primary Classroom*. Croom Helm Ltd. Australia.

**Knowing the Learner**

Myklebust, H. R. (1975). *Non-verbal Learning Disabilities: Assessment and Interventions*. In Myklebust, H., *Progress in Learning Disabilities*, 3, 85-121. New York: Grune and Stratton.

Puri, M. and Abraham, G. (2004) *Handbook of Inclusive Education for Educators, Administrator, and Planners*. Sage Publications, New Delhi.

Yesslydyke, E. James. Algozzinem, Bob. (2006). *Teaching Students who are Gifted and Talented, Special Education, A Practical Approach for Teachers*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, USA.





---

## UNIT 4 HELPING THE LEARNER TO BE AUTONOMOUS

---

### Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Autonomous learning: The Teacher's Role
- 4.3 Procedures for Supporting Autonomous Learning
- 4.4 Materials to Encourage Autonomous Learning
- 4.5 Evaluation Procedures for Autonomous Learning
- 4.6 Authentic Materials and Autonomous Learning
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Hints to Check Your Progress

---

### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

---

The objective of this unit is to help the teachers to enable their learners to be independent learners. These learners will tend to be self-reflective, aware of their weaknesses and have the ability to overcome their challenges. Therefore, the unit will stress on:

- 1) Shifting the focus from 'what to learn' to 'how to learn'
- 2) Examining 'how to do' procedures

---

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

---

Deepthi is an autonomous learner. She has the willingness and capacity to learn on her own. She is in class 8. One day, the teacher gave her class a task. In groups of four, the students had to discuss who their favorite woman leader was and tell the class about her. The focus was on justifying their choice from among four leaders. There were cue cards that included a few biographical details and two quotes each by the four women.

When it was Deepthi's turn, she summed up Mrs. Gandhi's life and concluded it by linking her life to what Mrs. Gandhi had said. One of the quotes was about forgiving the sinner. Deepthi said that Mrs. Gandhi must have had a number of enemies because of her position and she must have forgiven them. And hence, what she said must have come from her own experiences.

The class teacher said, "next", and moved on. Quite a few students simply read or summed up what they had found in their cues. Then, it was Nalini's turn. She spoke about Mother Theresa. She too related what the holy nun said meant in her life and to the life of others.

**To be autonomous, the learner has to know what to learn and how to learn it too.** They must also feel responsible enough to want to learn. This would involve a good deal of **willingness** and a **readiness to take risk** by the learners.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) Is Deepthi’s teacher someone who facilitates students to be autonomous learners? How could she have encouraged autonomous learning?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- 2) Is Nalini an autonomous learner?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

**4.2 AUTONOMOUS LEARNING: THE TEACHER’S ROLE**

---

In the situation we just examined, only two learners understood learning in the right sense.

Although the teacher did not appreciate or comment on what Deepthi had done, Nalini learned how she might approach the task from her classmate. She could perceive the difference in the quality of the presentations made by Deepthi and the rest of her class. Then, she made a conscious choice and chose to do something similar to what Deepthi had done.

The example illustrates how an autonomous learner demonstrates:(i)a willingness to learn, (ii) a realization that learning is their own responsibility, (iii)an ability to make choices, and (iv)the courage to take risk. Neither Deepthi nor Nalini might be able to consciously analyze what they have done. But, they constructed effective discourse. This shows their awareness of the parameters for not just the presentation but communication itself. They need guidance to become conscious of what makes their response appealing. It will help them transfer the knowledge to other areas of communication. Only an autonomous learner-teacher can give this kind of support.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) Does autonomous learning involve choices?

.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
2) Does autonomous learning mean learning without help?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

### 4.3 PROCEDURES FOR SUPPORTING AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

---

What is ‘learning’? In the context of a language classroom, learning may be understood as becoming aware of certain cognitive processes and demonstrating the awareness through language use.

We as teachers may use different procedures and supportive material that encourage this approach.

For example, we can develop a few paragraphs on the blackboard together with the class if we want to teach them paragraph writing. Students soon take charge if we:

- give them time to think,
- comment on and justify choices, and
- value their contributions.

The accompanying discussion will familiarize them with the parameters for evaluating their own paragraphs. We can also start the activity after giving the students a checklist for writing a paragraph. Students may also select paragraphs from any subject and discuss them in class.

Such activities guide the learner to appreciate the cognitive processes involved in developing their potential to think and communicate independently as well in collaboration with others.

For example, consider describing a character. In this context, the first question for us teachers to think about is, what do learners need to know in order to do it? The answer may be found in samples of authentic communication, sometimes available in the textbook itself. It is also possible for the teacher to ask the class to look for descriptions of characters in the books they read.

This may be followed by the teacher analyzing a few descriptions together with the students. Eliciting responses to questions such as:

What does the writer say about the character?

What do you think about the character?

What does the character think about himself or herself?

What do other characters think about him/ her?

How do they behave in different situations?

Is there a change/growth in the character during the story? Where does it happen?

At this stage, the focus must be shifted to the use of appropriate discourse. The class may examine the samples available to them and choose which they prefer. The teacher may draw their attention to various lexical and grammatical choices too.

Noticing different choices, considering and examining them during the process of writing will help the learner grow to be independent, especially when supported by the teacher.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) How does collaborative writing support independent learning?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- 2) Does the 'how to do' activity in the class help students learn beyond the classroom?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

**4.4 MATERIALS TO ENCOURAGE  
AUTONOMOUS LEARNING**

---

Miss Devi likes to experiment with different kinds of materials. One day she read a story to the class and asked them to write it in groups of three. She gave two sample beginnings and told them to share their first sentence with the class. Her examples were:

**It would never have happened if he hadn't been to his friend's birthday party.**

**Do you ever wonder what happened to the passenger you met on a train journey last year?**

In ten minutes, students began to respond and the teacher got six different

beginnings on the blackboard. The discussion focused on how the stories should be continued.

Such classroom procedures illustrate how we may shift our focus from 'what' to 'how'. Consider the following activity as another case in point.

The textbook included a speech and a few comprehension questions which addressed only the content of the text. To teach the class the 'how' of a speech, Miss Devi designed a few activities which included the following questions:

The speaker narrates two experiences to drive home his point. Can you replace them with your own to give the same message?

If you are giving a speech will you give the message or a story first? Or, will you alternate a story with the message throughout the speech?

Can you think of any famous people's sayings or lines from poems that may be appropriate? Where will you insert them, in the speech?

Only a few of her students are willing to take responsibility for their learning now, and Miss Devi knows it. Like many other teachers, she also thinks that the others must be shown the direction now.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) What aspects of learning do such practices highlight?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- 2) What kind of activities encourage self-monitoring?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

## 4.5 EVALUATION PROCEDURES FOR AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

---

Formative Evaluation, as we all know, informs us about how individual students are progressing in relation to the target learning outcomes. What is most often neglected is, how it may be used to teach the learner what to learn and how to learn it. In other words, formative evaluation procedures, if designed and implemented to help students, can guide them to learn independently. Instead of treating them as testing tools, we may use them to support learning.

The following situation and the teacher’s response helps us understand her attitude to formative evaluation.

The teacher evaluated and returned the answer scripts. Quite a few students thought that they had done their internal assessment reasonably well and felt disappointed by the marks they were given. When the class was over, a few of them followed her to the staff room. After a good deal of hesitation, one of them came up and asked the only question they all wanted to ask, “Teacher, I expected a higher score for this question. Have I not answered it correctly?”

The teacher said, “The answer is correct. But, you have not organized it well”. Her other comments were on vocabulary, grammar, paragraphing, handwriting etc. The students felt discouraged and no wiser. She also carefully defended and justified all her evaluation procedures; she discussed every response, answered all their questions patiently, and added a few marks here and there. They left feeling better.

**Check Your Progress 5**

- 1) Examine how the teacher’s response reflects the power relations inherent in a teacher -dependent context.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- 2) Does the teacher’s response help them prepare for their next internal assessment?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

**4.6 AUTHENTIC MATERIALS AND AUTONOMOUS LEARNING**

---

Most often, learning does not happen as soon as something is taught. Students may do what is expected of them, in terms of answering questions or writing an essay, without actually realizing its significance.

They may not be able to relate it to the other things that they have already learnt although the textbook planners expect them to. There are other times when we introduce a new point of learning, and students happen to understand something that we had ‘taught’ some time ago. Learning does not happen in a linear fashion. More so, in a language learning context. Consider the following examples.

The student stood up, and said excitedly, “Now, I know when to use the past perfect tense”. The teacher was surprised because she had taught the tense more than a month ago and she scored one hundred percent in her grammar test soon after that. So, the teacher asked her to explain what she meant. And this was her reply, “For my history project, I read an essay on our struggle for Independence and in the geography class we read about the continental drift. I had learned about them and learned the past perfect too”.

The incident shows that the teacher’s instruction made sense only after the learner had the opportunity to notice the use of the tense in materials outside the English classroom. It also illustrates, among many other things, the joy of independent learning.

Indeed, the opportunities we create in the classroom are restricted in number and nature too. Therefore, the focus has to be on the *how* of learning and this cannot be done without depending on the authentic material that is available outside the classroom. Identifying the source of learning and the points to be learnt are the two kinds of guidance the learner will find useful. This is best done when we focus more on discourse and less on discrete elements. Learning to use vocabulary is more important than learning about words in isolation. Similarly, learning to use tenses appropriately is more important than learning the rules. Authentic material creates innumerable opportunities for showing the learner the right direction. The more we relate such material to their background knowledge, the richer the student’s autonomous learning, beyond the classroom. But, the classroom has to be the lab where they experiment with their learning in a productive form with the teacher – and – peer support. Here is an example of how we may bring different kinds of discourse, activate cognitive processes, and shift them from the path of autonomous comprehension to autonomous production.

Read the beginning of the poem *Granny’s tree climbing* by Ruskin Bond and try to think of the usual questions that follow it:

My grandmother was a genius. You’d like to know why? Because she could climb trees. Spreading or high, She’d be up their branches in a trice. And mind you, When last she climbed a tree, she was sixty-two. Ever since childhood, she’d had this gift

For being happier in a tree than in a lift; And, though, as years went by, she would be told That climbing trees should stop when one grew old And that growing old should be gone about gracefully She’d laugh and say, ‘Well, I’ll grow old disgracefully’.

Our students usually answer questions such as the following:

- 1) Why is the poetic persona’s grandmother a genius?
- 2) How old was she?
- 3) What does she like to do?
- 4) What gift did she have?
- 5) What do people tell her? Does she agree with them?

Now, reflect on the following question:

This is a news report on Lata Khare who participated in a marathon. Imagine that she is your grandmother and write a story or poem on her. If you would prefer to, imagine that you saw the marathon and write a letter to a friend. Whatever you write, your purpose is to highlight what you admire in the winner.

<http://relax.life/true-inspiring-story-elderly-woman-ran-marathon-barefoot-won.html>

Retrieved on 17 July 2018

The next day, Baramati Marathon was about to commence. Everyone lined up were geared up in their sports shoes, snazzy shorts and tracks, sweat absorbing tees. And there she was, the 65 year old Lata Bhagwan Khare, wearing a torn Saree (Indian traditional wear), bare footed, tears in her eyes.

She argued with the organizers. They were not ready to break rules and let her participate in the marathon. She pleaded, she begged, and her sincere emotional appeal touched their hearts and they decided to approve her participation just for a lark, not even giving her a ghost of a chance to win.

The organizers playfully cheered her, 'Go for it Aunty!' The Marathon started and she hitched her saree just above her ankles. She ran like a wizard, truly a dream run, like a 16 year old. People standing alongside the path were totally taken aback by this sprightly old lady sprinting and broke into a loud cheer.



### **Lata Khare leaves all other senior citizens far, far behind**

She ran like someone possessed. She could just see her husband's life hanging by a slender thread and the winning amount in front of her eyes. She didn't care about the hard gravel and pebbles on her way. Her feet bled, but she just ran and ran.



### Check Your Progress 6

- 1) Give any three reasons for supplementing the textbook with authentic material for encouraging autonomous learning?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) How does mixed- genre- approach guide independent learning?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

## 4.7 LET US SUM UP

---

Learning involves a great deal of cognitive processing and it is a lifelong process. If we learn about how to do something, we will acquire the confidence to do it. The awareness reduces anxiety and helps us focus on the task on hand. We will be able to improve our performance over a period of time, and transfer our learning to doing other things too.

In this context, the first step a teacher takes is, understand the various steps necessary for participating in a communicative event. Then, she evolves procedures to raise the students' consciousness of the steps. Thus, the whole process is set in motion - helping the learner to be autonomous. In other words, the teacher has three responsibilities: become a conscious learner, break down learning the 'how' into teachable steps, and create activities to nurture responsible learning. An autonomous learner-teacher appreciates them, and adopts independent learning practices.

---

## 4.8 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The teacher could have appreciated the nuances in Deepthi's presentation and given her feedback on how she connected the different points and created a perspective on Mrs. Gandhi's life. Instead of repeating what she had read, Deepthi highlighted an aspect of the leader's personality that she admired. This made the portrait comprehensive and coherent.

Analytical feedback serves two purposes. First, it encourages learners to continue to take risks while learning something new. Secondly, it helps the

class become conscious of how they may approach the task using the given information.

- 2) Nalini is an autonomous learner for quite a few reasons.

She did not follow the class. In choosing to learn from Deepthi's answer, she demonstrated that she could take decisions, select from available choices, and take risks. She paid attention to the details of the other presentations and monitored her own performance. She knew what to learn. Students like Nalini and Deepthi make invaluable contributions in collaborative learning environments.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Content and language both offer innumerable choices. While participating in any communicative event, the learner has to think about what is appropriate. At every stages/he also pays attention to what s/he understands. This, in turn, is determined by her/his own background knowledge and her/his readiness to learn something new. For example, when the teacher is developing a paragraph on the blackboard, the learner may choose to focus on vocabulary, sentence formation, coherence, or cohesion. While participating in the discussion, a few learners, in fact, may be thinking about communication in other subjects like science or geography. The personality of the learner, her/his needs and most importantly her/his willingness to learn play a key role in the choices a learner makes. Not everyone likes to take risk. Some learners are prone to anxiety. Even adult learners, sometimes, cannot cope with the stress that accompanies the choice to learn. **Taking these factors into consideration, a teacher needs to create opportunities for learning.**
- 2) No. We take help from teachers, peers, and others around us. We also have sources such as books and the internet to learn and seek help from. And, the responsibility to show the direction lies with the teacher. Guiding the learner to identify and examine meaningful choices, providing constructive feedback, and offering guidance during the process of learning are some of the ways in which the teacher can nurture autonomous learning.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) A collaborative classroom supports learners both emotionally and academically. The teacher's guidance lowers their anxiety levels and builds their confidence to think towards the communicative goals. As different responses are considered and discussed, students become aware of the various choices they have. Discussions with the teacher help them reflect on what is relevant to a context and sharpens their ability to take decisions. They learn to think critically, examine content and language, focus on the nature of discourse to appreciate coherence and cohesion, and develop as language users.
- 2) Yes. The activity directs them towards what they must 'notice'. It will show them how to learn it in collaboration with others. Soon, they will be able to notice what is relevant to their own learning and grow aware of how to learn it too. More importantly, they begin to find new ways of learning on their own. What they learn in the language class they may apply in their

subject classes. They will be able to think across languages since most of them know more than one language.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Practices that operationalize learning and approach it in terms of manageable goals address learning as a cognitive process. They also illustrate the teacher's understanding that the cognitive processes are stimulated by affective and academic factors.

They make learners realize that learning involves decision-making at every stage. And hence, they are encouraged to know that they may learn not just from the teacher or the textbook but other sources including their peers. They are equally encouraged to notice what they must learn, the idea of taking risks and participating in the activity, making mistakes, accepting constructive criticism and trying to learn. The fact that they are shown the direction through authentic samples and analysis and given the parameters for evaluating their work, shows them that they have the responsibility to learn to do better. Evidently, teachers' constructive feedback, given during the process of developing a text, puts them on the path of responsible learning.

- 2) Activities that encourage self-monitoring:

How do I do something?

How do I evaluate what I have done?

Guiding the learner to find answers to these two questions is central to helping them to be autonomous.

The process of learning begins with answering the first question. One of the ways in which this may be done is, help the learner identify the small manageable goals/ steps inherent to a communicative task. It is similar to preparing the route map to a destination. For example, if the learner has to discuss pollution, they will need:

Ideas

a perspective

a template/format/discourse

language (topic -specific vocabulary, some awareness of sentence construction)

Necessary support may be drawn from authentic material, print or online which familiarizes them with what is expected of them and reinforces any previous learning. This conceptual and linguistic guidance must be followed by a class discussion to build their confidence and guide them to produce something meaningful. Without this scaffolding, they will be able to learn very little.

All these activities – comprehension, examination, selection and justification of choices involve cognitive processes that happen simultaneously along with an equally challenging process, decision-making. And, decision-making involves evaluation. The ability to take informed decisions depends upon the learner's awareness of the parameters for evaluating the choices

in any specific context. Therefore, a collaborative environment that gives the learner the confidence and courage to take risk, through classroom activities, creates the right forum for helping the learners to be autonomous.

### Check Your Progress 5

- 1) Situations mentioned in the Unit illustrate how students are programmed to believe that the teacher's response is the only acceptable response. This discourages them from any critical thinking. Even those students who may have an opinion, choose to remain silent because they do not want their self-respect hurt. Language learning has to be synonymous with becoming aware of infinite possibilities. If the content is put in a straitjacket by the teacher, the students will be left with no choice but to learn everything by rote. What is equally unfortunate, this style of learning gets transferred to the learning of the other subjects like sciences or social sciences and students become more and more dependent on memorizing. They stop thinking.
- 2) No, what helps any learner is the awareness of how they may approach a question. Not the teacher's answer. They must appreciate how their response has to meet with the requirements inherent to the question. This understanding is a pre-requisite to answering any question effectively. At the same time, the teacher also has a responsibility; she should make the question one hundred percent clear. Consider the following simple questions:
  - a) What are the most important differences between them?
  - b) What are the three most important differences between them?

Even when we specify the number of differences it will still be challenging to evaluate the response objectively. We need to consider questions such as, are we going to accept the differences in any order? Do we, as examiners, rate one of the differences more important than the rest and hence expect it to be presented first? How much value do we attach to the introduction and conclusion? Will we give any extra marks for any unexpected but relevant details? In case we find a response that discusses their importance explicitly and describes the differences in a specific order, are we willing to give it higher score? If the contents are presented in ungrammatical English, what should we do?

These are all our concerns. If the learners, too, becomes aware of them they will be on the path of independent learning. They will know how they may approach the question and what to include and how to include it in their answer. This kind of conceptual knowledge demands a great deal of cognitive processing. It is transferrable too. Acquiring it in one context, the learners use it across subjects and languages. They will be better prepared for any assessment because they begin to think about the possibilities the content and language offer.

If formative evaluation is used to help students realize that the question itself determines what the answer should be, it will serve the right purpose – learn what to learn and how to learn it too.

### Check Your Progress 6

- 1) We will discuss three reasons here. There may be more, depending on the context.

Texts are selected with a specific level of proficiency in mind. Rarely are all our students at the same level. Some of them may be able to work with 'advanced' material in terms of both concepts and English. Others may need guidance with the language of the prescribed texts. There may also be first generation learners like Deepthi and Nalini, who are independent learners in spite of the fact that they are from economically backward families and receive no academic support outside the classroom. Therefore, we use authentic texts and enhance the relevance of the prescribed instructional material. Students will become aware of where to learn from and how to learn it.

Secondly, the ability to communicate in any situation includes an awareness of the contextual parameters such as formality or informality, purpose, relationship between the interlocutors, format or structure, and the language among many other things. Each topic or subject demands topic-specific vocabulary and a reasonable command of its use. There is no gainsaying the fact that the textbook cannot provide the learner with adequate support. If the teacher directs the class' attention to the material available outside the classroom, some of them try to learn from it. The teacher may strengthen and facilitate their learning further. The spinoff is, what independent learners do which enhances the quality of the work in the classroom.

Thirdly, comprehension precedes production. If students can be encouraged to read different texts outside the classroom, their class time can be used for sharpening their production skills. Spending most of the class time on comprehension jeopardizes the opportunities essential for active practice, which in turn, will encourage rote learning.

- 2) We can express the same thought in different genres and forums. For example, the textbook may include a poem on bullying. The learner can have an introduction to a wide array of texts that present the concept – formal and informal complaints, essays, letters, news stories, notices, pamphlets, and stories - followed by a discussion of the differences. This helps them understand the significance of the nuances of communication. It will also guide them to notice the features of language use in academic situations which is most important in our Indian context where English is used more for academic than non-academic purposes. Once they notice what they have to learn, they may try to learn it without the teacher's support.

