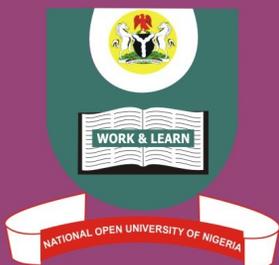# ECE 203:
LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN THE EARLY YEARS

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

Course Code

COURSE GUIDE

**ECE 203
LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN THE
EARLY YEARS**

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Introduction

I am delighted to welcome you formally to this course titled ECE 203 – Language and Literacy in the Early Years. Surely you must have learnt quite a lot about Early Childhood Education in your 100 level and your interest in this area of knowledge must have been stimulated. This course, ECE 203 will further heighten your enthusiasm in Early Childhood Education as you will be exposed to in-depth knowledge about the child. The course material is learner friendly, it takes cognisance of your peculiar situations and it is written in such a way that your interest will be sustained.

This guide gives you an overview of this course. It provides vital information regarding the structure and the demand of the course.

ECE 203 – Language and Literacy in the Early Years is a two-credit unit course.

Course Aims

The aims are to expose you to how children learn the basic elements of language – sounds, meaning and grammar. You will also learn how children use language, develop literacy skills and use language skills to access information and use it effectively and develop positive attitude to language and literacy. To achieve these broad aims, ECE 203 will:

(i)   Introduce you to what language is and how children acquire language.
(ii)   Give you broad-based knowledge of the theories of language acquisition.
(iii)   Expose you to what literacy is that is reading and writing skills; and
(iv)   Discuss how literacy cuts across the school curriculum

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you should be able to:
(i)   Define what language is and discuss the stages of language development in the early years.
(ii)   Discuss how children acquire language
(iii)   Examine whether language is innate or acquired
(iv)   Explain how children use language

(v)   Discuss what mother tongue (L1), the second language (L2) and bilingualism are

(vi)   Examine the theories relevant to language acquisition of the child.

(vii)   Discuss what reading is and the effects of reading abilities on reading.

(viii) Identify practical activities that will enhance acquisition of language.

(ix)   Discuss reading readiness and the checklist of reading readiness.

(x)   Examine reading approaches – the merits and demerits of the approaches.

(xi)   Discuss how to organise reading instructions and the relevant instructional materials.

(xii)   Discuss what handwriting is and the practical activities that will ensure good handwriting

(xiii) Explain how language is featured in learning the core school subjects.

Course Requirements

To complete the course, you are required to read the study units and read the references cited for each unit where available. You will also need to go through the exercises in each of the units. Please note that the exercises are not to test you but to make you recapitulate salient points discussed in each sub-unit. At the end of each unit, you will be required to submit written assignments for continuous assessment purposes. Also, at the end of the course, you will be required to write a final examination.

Course Materials

The major course materials you will need for the course apart from the usual pens, pencil and note-books are listed below:

(i)   Course Guide

(ii)   Study units broken down into 15 units

(iii)   Assessment file

(iv)   Relevant textbooks including the ones listed at the end of each unit.

Study Units

There are fifteen (15) units divided into four modules. The units are arranged according to the relevance of the modules. The units and modules are listed below:

Module 1   Language and its Development in the Early Years

Unit 1:   Development of Language
Unit 2:   The Process of Language Acquisition
Unit 3:   The Role of Language in Early Years
Unit 4:   Mother Tongue, English Language and Billingualism in Early Years.

Module 2:   Theories of Language Acquisition

Unit 1:   Behaviourist Theory of Language Acquisition
Unit 2:   Vygotsky's Cultural/Cognitive Theory of Language Acquisition
Unit 3:   Maturationist Theory of Language Acquisition

Module 3:   The Development of Literacy in Early Years

Unit 1:   Literacy and Pre-reading Activities
Unit 2:   Pre-reading Activities and Reading Readiness
Unit 3:   Approach for Teaching Reading
Unit 4:   Organisation of Reading Instruction
Unit 5:   Reading Activities

Module 4:   The Development of Writing Skill

Unit 1:   Handwriting
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Unit 3:   Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum

Assessment File

Assessment file for the course will be made available to you. In this file, you will find details of work that you will submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain in the continuous assessment will count towards your

final marks. You are expected to pass both the continuous assessment and the final examinations.

Strategies for Studying the Course

Although you will be required to study these units on your own, arrangements have been made for regular interactions with your tutor at the study center. The tutor is expected to conduct tutorials and useful discussion sessions with you and other students.

Presentation Schedule

The dates to finish the course and to present each assignment will be announced to you later. You must keep strictly to all deadlines.

Summary

This course guide is an overview of the course ECE 203: Language and Literacy in the Early Years. My sincere wish for you is to have exciting and rewarding studies through the course.

ECE 203

Course Title	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN THE EARLY YEARS
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MODULE 1

LANGUAGE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS

Unit 1   Development of Language
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Unit 4   Mother tongue, English Language and Bilingualism in Early Years.

UNIT 1:   DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

A major part of being human is the variety of ways in which we communicate by using sounds and words in speaking. We express our thoughts and feelings to others either in vocal or written form by means of language. Language is an important factor in the development of a child's personality.

In this unit, we would be discussing the meaning of language and its stages of development in early years. We shall also examine how we can foster or enhance language development in the early years of the child's development.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

(a) Define what language is
(b) Name and describe the stages of language development
(c) Name and describe the factors that influence language development.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   What is Language?

You already know that a major part of being human is the variety of ways in which we communicate through language by using sounds and words in speaking or singing, writing to others and reading what others have written. Language is a phenomenon that distinguishes human beings from lower animals. Can you try and imagine why this is so? Yes, you can. Human beings express themselves using a system of vocal conventional signs characteristic of the interaction of one or more communities of human beings. Kluckorn (1972) defined language as "the body of words and combination of words used by a nation, people or race for the purpose of communicating their thoughts". Language is important because skilled communication underlies most successful human interaction while failed communication can lead to unpleasant misunderstandings, rifts and even war. Can you pause and think why this is so? The answer is not far fetched. It is because human beings are social animals. Human beings are the only animals to acquire a highly developed and complex system of communication. We live with others, depend on them and they depend on us for survival. It is very important therefore that children acquire language at early years to be meaningful members of their community.

Exercise

1. What distinguishes human beings from lower animals is _____.
2. What is language?

Answer:

1. Language

2. Language is the system of using sounds and words to communicate our thoughts and feelings to others and have same communicated to us by others.

3.1.1   Stages of Language Development

Have you ever imagined how a child learns to talk and how he/she comes to understand other people's speech? In fact, learning to talk and to understand other people's speech is one of the most complex things a child has to do. One of the most remarkable aspects of a child's development is the growth in his/her ability to use and understand language. What the child needs to do is to start with skills that enable him/her to understand and talk. These skills are embedded in comprehension and production of language which culminate in language acquisition. Details of which will be discussed in the next unit.

The stages of rudimentary language development is as yet not fully understood. However, certain stages have been identified as those that a child goes through in the process of acquiring the skills for hearing, understanding and speaking. These stages are as shown in Chart I and II below:

CHART I

	Hearing Understanding	Talking
Birth – 3 months	• Startles to loud sounds • Quiets or smiles when spoken to • Seems to recognise some voices and quiets if crying • Increases or decreases sucking behaviour in response to sound	• Makes pleasure sounds (cooing) • Cries differently for different needs • Smiles when she sees you • Babies using two syllable sounds
4 – 6 months	• Moves eyes in direction of sounds • Responds to changes in tone of your voice • Notices toys that make sounds • Pays attention to music	• Babbling sounds more speech-like with many different sounds including p, b and m • Vocalizes excitement, and displeasure • Makes gurgling sounds when left alone and when playing with you

| 7 – 12 months | • Enjoys games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake
• Turns and looks in direction of sounds
• Listens when spoken to
• Recognises words for common items like cup, shoe
• Begins to respond to requests ("come here", "want more") | • Babbling has both long and short groups of sounds such as "tata upup bibibibi"
• Uses speech or non-crying sounds to get and keep attention
• Imitates different speech sounds
• Has 1 or 2 words (bye-bye, dada, mama) although these may not be clear |

Source: http//www.readingrockets.org/articles/5129.

Let us have a closer look at chart 1 and discuss the stages of the rudimentary language development of the child in the early years.

Stage I: Birth to 1 Year

From the chart, we see that from birth to three months, babies engage in a wide range of vocalisation. They try out many sounds. Can you identify such sounds from your experience even without looking at the chart? Here is a list of such sounds:

1. Crying: This is the first of the sounds babies make.
2. Cooing: Cooing is a series of soft mainly vowel sounds which seem to be produced when the baby is relaxed and contented.
3. Gurgling sounds: These involve consonant as well as vowel sounds. Sounds such as 'ah', 'eh' could be distinguished.
4. Babbling: Babbling follows the gurgling sounds. Babbling unlike cooing which seems unstructured is actually highly structured. Babbling are two syllable sounds like da-da, ka-ka, di-di, je-je where the second syllable is a repetition of the first.

Stringing sounds together: At this stage of language development, infants begin to string sounds together, repeating the same sound patterns. He/she begins to take greater interest in the human voice speaking to him. He/she begins to vary the itched volume of vocalisation just as in real speech. Demonstrate these actions in turn.

Exercise

1   Name two ways you tell that a three month old baby hears?

Answers

(a) He/She startles to loud sounds.

(b) Quiets or smiles when spoken to.

2   What is a cooing sound?

Answer

It is a sound a child makes when he is contented.

3   Examples of babbling sounds are

Answer

ta-ta, ka-ka

There is evidence that young children on their own practice their language usage just as adults do when learning a foreign language. Weir (1962), a child psychologist described her study on the language development of her own child. She collected tape recordings of her 2½ year old son's nighttime monologues – the sounds he made just before falling asleep. She found that in the course of his monologue he would play with words, practice using them in different ways, drill himself on sounds and work on correcting errors of pronunciation.

This revelation supports the fact that in the earliest stages of language comprehension, children are primarily trying to sort out the blur of sound around them into discrete sounds or group of sounds. Infants must first discriminate among the sounds swirling around them and pick out those that seem to recur.

In order to actually comprehend a word or phrase, children must be able to associate it with an object, action or situation. The discrimination and the association probably occur simultaneously and are part of the same process. For example, when a mother brings her baby a bottle, she will probably say something like "Here's your bottle" or "Want your bottle now?". The baby

will gradually pick out some of these sounds as being distinctive in some way and as being associated with a particular object, action or situation.

What we have so far studied is how babies hear, understand and talk from birth to 12 months. Let us go further to examine stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 of language development which are between 1 and 5 years as shown in Chart II below. The chart is self explanatory. 1-2 years is stage 2, 2-3 years is stage 3, 3-4 years is stage 4 and 4-5 years is stage 5. Read each of these stages in the chart and try to relate what you read to what you know of children's language development.

Chart II

	Hearing Understanding	Talking
1 – 2 years	• Points to a few body parts when asked • Follows simple commands and understands simple questions ("Roll the ball", "kiss the baby", "where's your shoe?") • Listens to simple stories, songs, and rhymes • Points to pictures in a book when named	• Says more words every month • Uses some 1-2 word questions ("Go, bye-bye", What's that?) • Puts two words together ("mommy book") • Uses many different consonant sounds at the beginning of words
2 – 3 years	• Understands differences in meaning ("go-come", "in-on", "big-little", "up-down") • Follows two requests ("Get the book and put it on the table").	• Has a word for almost everything • Uses 2-3 word "Sentences" to talk about and ask for things • Speech is understood by familiar listeners most of the time • Often asks for or directs attention to object by naming them
3 – 4 years	• Hears you when you call from another room • Hears television or	• Talks about activities at school or at friends' homes • People outside family

	radio at the same loudness level as other family members • Understands simple, "who?", "what?", "where?", "why?" questions	usually understand child's speech • Uses a lot of sentences that have four or more words • Usually talks easily without repeating syllables or words
4 –5 years	• Pays attention to a short story and answers simple questions about it. • Hears and understands most of what is said at home and in school	• Voice sounds clear like other children's • Uses sentences that give lots of details (e.g. "I like to read my books") • Tells stories that stick to topic • Communicates easily with other children and adults • Says most sounds correctly except a few like l, s, r, v, z, ch, sh, th

3.1.2 Factors Influencing Language Development in the Early Years.

A number of factors affect language development. Let us discuss some of these briefly.

(a) **The level of intelligence:** As a rule, sub-normal children learn to talk much later than children of normal or superior intelligence. However, some bright children learn to talk late and it by no means follows that a child who is late in talking will be mentally retarded.

(b) **Stimulating cultural background:** There is a tendency for children who come from homes where there are books and cultural interests to be spoken to and read to often and to be told stories. These activities greatly help children. Many studies show that children born in unstimulating environment show retardation in language development.

(c) **A good pattern of adult speech:** Adults should give up using 'baby talk' when speaking to children more than a year. In particular, they

should make explicit what it is they intend to say. Adults should use language correctly when talking about spatial and temporal relationships to children and when describing to children objects persons or events not actually present.

(d) **Adults Encouragement:** Adults can help children by encouraging them to imitate them and to try out new words/sentences. They can help even more by encouraging children to use language correctly when dealing with spatial and temporal relationships and when describing situations not actually present.

(e) There is some evidence to suggest that rapid motor progress such as progress in walking may hinder language development for a short while.

Exercise

1   List the factors that can influence language development in early years.

4.0   CONCLUSION

 Language is a tool that distinguishes human beings from other animals. The development of language is an important aspect of child development. A knowledge of the stages of language development and the factors that influence these will help you as a teacher of children.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we examined the definition of language, the stages of language development and also the factors that influence language development in the early years. You will learn more in the next unit.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1(a).   Define language.
 (b).   Describe the first four stages of language development in human beings.

2.   Explain three factors that affect language development in the early years.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Harvey, (1975). Child Psychology for Self-study or Classroom Use. Canada: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

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UNIT 2:   **THE PROCESS OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1, we discussed among other things that language is the system of sounds and words used by humans to express their thoughts and feelings. You also learnt about the ages at which most children accomplish skills in hearing, understanding and talking. We discussed the factors that influence language development in humans.

In this unit, we shall be discussing the process of language acquisition. This we would do by examining what language acquisition is and whether language is innate and how we can foster language development.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of language acquisition
- Explain whether language is innate or acquired.
- Give examples of means of fostering language development.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   What is Language Acquisition?

When we speak of language acquisition, we mean the learning of language for comprehension and production. Language comprehension refers to how much a child actually understands of what is spoken. Comprehension begins from birth. A child hears and understands a language before he can

speak it. From birth babies acquire speech sounds from the environment. The volume of speech sounds acquired depends upon the frequency of speech sounds in the environment and the child's level of maturation. Language production on the other hand refers to a child's ability to use language. When a baby is born, he/she makes sounds and those that he hears adult use become incorporated into his language. The more a child hears adults and other children in his environment speak a language the more chances he has of developing the language.

Psychologists have discovered that a child understands more words than he/she actually uses, that is children usually comprehend much more than they actually produce. Playing with a child, talking to him, reading to him and letting him listen to music, radio and television will stimulate a child's language development.

Exercise

(a)   Name and describe three ways you can help a child develop his language.

(b)   Briefly describe the process of language acquisition.

3.1.1 Is Language Acquired or Innate?

Many psychologists who study young children's acquisition of language believe that language operating principles are part of our biological heritage (Fodor, Bever and Garett, 1974). They assert that children are born with a mechanism or device that is capable of processing all the language sounds around them. All humans talk but no house pet or house plant does so. This innate mechanism is called language acquisition device. According to Laqun, language acquisition is possible only because children are programmed to analyse language data in a certain way. The evidence is that given a few critical cues innate behavior emerges more or less automatically. The children do not have to learn the language acquisition process step by step through observation and imitation.

Children progress from simple to complex sentences, acquiring new grammatical constructions in a predictable order despite large variations on how often adults around them use these constructions. The pattern is much the same for all children. These psychologists believe that environmental factors are relatively unimportant for language emergence. Chomsky (1965) claims language learners possess innate principles building a "language acquisition device" in the brain. The language acquisition device

is to filter all incoming speech and come up with a principle of how speech is constructed.

Contrary to the above biological views, behavioural views assert that languages are learned as any other behavior, through conditioning. Mowrer (1960) opines that languages are acquired through rewarded imitation of language models. The models must have an emotional link to the learner (e.g. parent) as imitation then brings pleasant feelings which function as positive reinforcement.

Not everyone believes that children are innately programmed to analyse linguistic data in a certain way. Some psychologists still argue that reinforcement and imitation can account for all language acquisition. This position is rooted in John Locke's blank-slate theory of learning. This argues that adults provide the language model and children learn by listening to and imitating them. Positive reinforcement from those same adults encourage children to continue their development. Young children frequently ape the words, phrases, poems and songs they hear around them, although they often lack the ability to reproduce everything accurately. When that occurs, they simply substitute a similar sounding word or phrase that has meaning to them. For example the Nigerian National Anthem – the first line "Arise o compatriots" Nigerian children ages 3 and below sing "Arise o compassion".

Another example is a common song – "We are h-a-p-p-y". They usually sing "We are h-h-p-p-y.

Another example is h-i-p for the hip, p-o-p-o for the hippopo and t-a-m-u-s for the hippopotamus. They sing h-i-p for the hip, p-om-p-o for the hippompo and t-h-m-u-s for the hippompotamus.

Negative reinforcement or no reinforcement at all can also affect children's language development.

The biological views of language learning is in line with the tradition of J.J. Rousseau who believed in the child's innate tendencies. These psychologists believe that children are pre-programmed for innate development. They argue that as children observe their social environments, they begin to understand how language works. They begin to intuit naturally the necessary rules and conventions of their language and begin to communicate intelligibly. They argue that while children need to hear language in order to understand it, adult instructions are not essential because a child's cognitive maturation will lead naturally to language

functioning. Those who hold these views are known as the maturationists while those who hold the view that the environment is important are the. Constructivists.

They believe that language is both genetically determined and environmentally influenced. They agree that biologically, humans have the ability to communicate through language. They however argue that humans make use of this ability as they respond to the sounds in their environment.

Most psychologists share the above view saying that as a part of their intellectual makeup, most people do look for regularities in their environment and do formulate rules to account for these regularities.

Piaget (1926) cited in Mitchel and Myles (1998) is one psychologist reluctant to ascribe specific innate linguistic abilities to children. He considers the brain a homogenous computational system with language acquisition being one part of general learning. He agrees this development may be innate but claims there is no specific acquisition module in the brain. Instead, he suggests external influences and social interaction trigger language acquisition.

People like Piaget who believe in the importance of the environment argue that language could be learnt through direct teaching. For instance they claim that children who are given objects and instructions on their use, will learn the names of the objects faster than children who have not had such instructions.

It is also possible to stimulate young children's comprehension of words by direct training. For example, if 9 month olds are shown simple objects and are told the names of the objects and the procedure is repeated several times, some of them will eventually learn to comprehend the new words and even say them. The environment therefore is very crucial in language development. This is why a child growing up in Kano speaks Hausa whereas the same child if brought up in Ibadan would speak Yoruba. Thus, there is no question about whether heredity or environment is involved in language acquisition or even whether one or the other is more important. Both are important.

Exercise

1. Is language development biologically or environmentally influenced?

Answer:

Language development is influenced by both innate or biological abilities as well as environmental factors.

3.1.2 The process of Language Acquisition

At about 1 to 1½ years, children begin to utter single words that refer to specific things they have had contact with. They talk predominantly about food, people, parts of the body, etc. As they use these words they become aware of their roles in communicative settings.

Between 1½ and 2½ years, children start to combine single words into 2-word utterances. The utterances reflect an appreciation of the roles of agent, object and location. The Child's use of language at this time is limited.. The child for instance leaves out articles like 'the', auxiliary verbs like 'is' and prepositions like 'on' and puts in only those words that carry the most important meaning. Despite their brevity, these utterances express most of the basic functions of language such as locating objects – "see toy", describing actions "mama go", etc.

Children progress rapidly from two-word utterances to more complex sentences. Clearly they do not just acquire a longer and larger vocabulary, they also learn more about how words are combined into sentences to express their thoughts and feelings more clearly.

Children also learn to use certain morphemes (internal structure and formation of words) that are critical for making sentences grammatical. Examples 'ing' (added to verbs to form the progressive e.g. picking), 'ed' (added to regular verbs to form the past – picked), 's' (added to nouns to form the plural – 'girls' and added to verbs in the present tense for the third person singular – the girl picks the doll).

From the above, we see that children progress from one-word utterances about agents, objects and places that they know to two-word utterances. Then, they begin to elaborate their noun and verb phrases, adding conjunctions and acquiring the appropriate grammatical morphemes.

According to Mussen (1974), structural pattern of speech in the early years is as follows:

- At 18 months, nouns and interjections make up 60% of the child's utterances.
- At 2 years, the child's sentence has 12 words, states simple requests and description and the sentence lacks auxiliaries, articles, connectives and prepositions.
- At 2-3 year, child's speech consists mainly of nouns, verbs, adjectives, a few pronouns and hardly any connectives.
- At 3-4 years, child's distribution of parts of speech in his conversion approximate that of adults.
- At the age of 4, children use complete sentences 6-8 words long, complex and complete with plurals past and future tenses. (Mussen, 1976 quote Maduewesi, 1999)

4.0   CONCLUSION

The importance of language in communication makes it necessary that children should be provided opportunities to acquire it.   Both the environment and the innate abilities of the child should be stimulated to encourage language development.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit you learnt what is involved in language acquisition process. You learnt of two views of language development namely biological and through the environment. We looked at whether the child develop language solely as a result of environmental stimulus or solely from genetic inheritance.   Although psychologists differ in these views, you can make a number of observations that transcend theory and provide practical information as caregivers and teachers.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT(TMA)

1. Name and describe four means you could use to stimulate language development in children.

2. (i)   Is language innate or acquired?
    (ii) Give two reasons for your answer.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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Chomsky, N (1975).   Reflections on Language.   New York: Random House.

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Unit 3:   THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN EARLY YEARS

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                3.1.3 Children Use Language to solve Problem
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In Unit 2, you learnt about language acquisition, language levels and the various views of psychologists on how children acquire language. I hope you have been able to take a position after a critical examination of these various views.   In this unit, you will learn how children use language to communicate, regulate and control their behavior and perform tasks.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:
(i)   Discuss language as a communication tool and
(ii)   Explain how children use language to control and regulate behaviours.
(iii)   Explain how children use language to solve problems.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1.1 Language Use

Language is a prerequisite to establishing understanding and cooperation at all levels of social relationships. It is closely linked with the processing of thinking and behavioral development of the child. It is a very important factor in the overall development of a child's personality. Children use language for a number of purposes such as: to communicate, regulate and control behaviour and to solve problems.

3.1.1 Children Use Language to Communicate

If I ask you to name the primary function of language, I am very sure that most of you would say "communication". If that is your answer, you are correct. The basis of communication is that two people are talking about the same subject and two of them are being influenced by what the other person says about the subject. However, Jean Piaget, a developmental psychologist who studied in detail the developmental changes in children's communication made it clear that a child's first words are egocentric that is, the words are centred on his own interests and actions. He argues that in the early years, children's communication centres on those things they have experienced through their senses and which are directly of personal interest to them.

Look at this example:
Two children are playing together and talking. Let us listen in.

Uche: I am playing with my ball.

Ify: My doll is sleeping.

Uche: This ball is too big for me.

Ify: I will cover my doll with cloth.

- Are Uche and Ify talking about the same subject? The answer is No.
- Is either one influencced by what the other is saying? The answer is also No.

The above are examples of speech that are egocentric.

Piaget has a term for speech that does not communicate. He refers to it as egocentric speech. When children below age 4 talk, they often do not communicate. Lev Vygotsky (1962) corroborates this by saying that infants begin to develop speech without understanding that its purpose is to communicate. They develop a self centred speech that only gradually becomes other centred when they realize that communication is two way.

Piaget noted that as children grow older, they use speech more and more to exchange ideas and information. This kind of speech, that is speech that actually communicates something, he called sociocentric speech. Let us listen to the conversation of two other children.

Olu: This is how to draw a ball.

Bola: You draw a circle then --- what?

Olu: Then, you draw a semi-circle up and down the circle.

Bola: Yeah. I get it now.

In this conversation, the two children are talking about the same subject (drawing a ball) and each is influenced by what the other says. So for two people to be communicating, they must be talking about the same subject and being influenced by what the other person is saying.

Lev Vygotsky argues that it is the adults in the children's environment who encourage the transition from speech as a private toy (egocentric) to speech as a social tool (socio centric).

The 1st step in this transition process begins when children start to understand something of what adults say to them even if they are unable to communicate themselves. With repeated interactions, children begin to pick up adult meanings and use them.

3.1.2 Children Use Language to Regulate and Control Behaviour/ Actions

Another way in which children can use language is to regulate and control their behavior. A Russian Psychologist A.R. Luria performed an experiment with some children to demonstrate how this works. He showed the children a red light and a green light and instructed them to press a rubber bulb when the red light comes on, but not to press it when the green light comes on. Children's natural tendency is to press the bulb anytime a light comes on. What they must do is inhibit the pressing response whenever the green light comes on. This experiment was designed to help them regulate their actions by stopping themselves from responding to one of the lights. The result of that experiment showed that language aided children in performing their task. Children who could say to themselves: "don't press when the green light comes" did better than children who did not use language in this way. This experiment demonstrates that children can use language to regulate and control their own actions. However, children's ability to use language to regulate their behavior increases with age.

Let us look a little more closely at how language works in regulating and controlling behavior. Some psychologists say that language is itself a response. **Example:** When a 1½ year old child sees a dog, the child's response might be to touch the dog, pull its hair, etc. But a 3 year old might say dog or doggie. In each case, the child has made a response to the sight of the dog. But the language response is the response of the three-year old that says doggie/dog.

Psychologists went further to prove that when a verbal or language response intervenes somehow between the stimulus and response, it is called a verbal or language mediator. This verbal response mediates or alters in some way the person's behavior. It shows that a verbal mediator is a verbal response that has an effect on a person's behaviour.

Example: A child's natural tendency is to pat a dog or pull its tail or touch it in some way. If after saying "doggie bites", a child stops himself from touching the dog or withdraws his hand, we will conclude that the child's utterance "doggie bites" has altered the child's behaviour.

Verbal mediators can be spoken by a child to himself/herself. Either way, these responses have an effect on the child's behaviour or actions.

Exercise

(a)   Here is a scenario where you have two four year old children who know that stoves are hot and can burn them.
        Child A: The Stove can burn me
        Child B: …….. (Does not say anything).
        For which of the children will the verbal mediator have an effect on the ultimate behaviour?
        Answer: Child A

(b)   Distinguish between egocentric and sociocentric speech.

3.1.3 Children Use Language in Thinking to Solve Problems.

Psychologists say that as children get older, more and more of their language use is for thinking and solving problems. That is when older children 'tell' themselves what instructions are, how to behave in certain situations or how to perform certain tasks. They use language to think, to observe, to direct their actions etc.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Children like all human beings use language for various purposes. From using language for egocentric purposes to using it for sociocentric purposes and for regulating their actions. The adults must ensure that children are helped.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that effective use of language is a prerequisite to understanding and cooperation at all levels of social relationships. That children use language to communicate and regulate and control their behaviours as well as develop their thoughts and solve problems.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1. For two people to be really communicating according to our definition, what must they be doing?

2. When we say that much of the speech of four-year olds is ego centric, what does this mean?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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Unit 4:   MOTHER TONGUE, ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND BILINGUALISM IN EARLY YEARS

CONTENT

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is made possible by the special adaptation of the human mind and the body that occurs in the course of human development. Anyone can learn a language but some people find it easier than others. Children for instance, generally have the facility to learn languages. In this unit, you will learn about mother tongue, bilingualism and second language in early year tongue, and the Nigerian educational policy on language.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

▪ Explain what mother tongue, second language and bilingualism are.
▪ Describe how children acquire the mother tongue and second language.
▪ Explain the National Language Policy.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   Mother Tongue in Early Years

One's own native language is called the mother tongue. It is the language one first learns to speak as a child. Research results support that the mother tongue is the ideal medium of instruction for a child living in its own language environment and that the child should be educated in the mother

tongue for as long as possible. This idea gained international support in the middle of the 20th Century. Linguists met in 1951 at the UNESCO meeting and recommended that children should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue. It was argued that children are maimed emotionally and intellectually when they are taught in a language with which they are not familiar with.

Scholars like Fafunwa (1976) supported this idea. He argues that children would acquire a great deal of habits, attitude and skills better and with a minimum of trauma if they are taught in the language they are most familiar with. He described the mother tongue as natural as the mother's milk which should be used to lay the foundation of teaching in order to facilitate development of curiosity, initiative and flexibility in the child's thinking. He opined that the child can build on his learning even in another language. He saw the mother tongue as a base for learning subsequent languages.

It has also been proven that the mother tongue facilitates understanding and internalisation of concepts and promotes continuity in thinking.

Specialists have opined that the early use of the mother tongue tends to facilitate a person's expression of intelligence, capacity and adaptability. The language gains being envisaged are revitalised including the acquisition of new vocabularies. If the mother tongue is used in the school, Maduewesi (2000) says that the home and the school are brought close together and both reinforce teaching done by the other.

The efficacy of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction has been demonstrated empirically with the "Ife Six Year Primary School Project" sponsored by the Ford Foundation. For the above reasons, the Nigerian government therefore says that the mother tongue should be used for early years education.

Exercise

1. Suppose you are running a Nursery school, which language will you use as medium of instruction? Give reasons for your choice.

3.2   Bilingualism in Early Years

People who can use two languages are bilingual. Are you bilingual? If yes How many languages can you speak? Do you have friends or children who are bilingual? Children especially can be bilingual. They can learn two languages at home for example if the parents are from different ethnic groups and they both use their languages at home. Some children speak both languages very well. Perfield and Roberts (1959) claim children under nine can learn up to three languages. Early exposure to different languages activates a reflex in the brain allowing Children to switch between languages without confusion or translation into L1. Children learn or recover language when the left hemisphere of the brain is damaged or even surgically removed but comparable damage in an adult leads to permanent aphasia. Most adults never master a foreign language.

Many explanations have been advanced for children's superiority; in language learning they can exploit the special way that their mothers talk to them, they make errors unself-consciously, they are motivated to communicate, they like to conform, they are not xenophobic or set in their ways. Lenneberg (1967) asserts that if no language is learned by puberty, it cannot be learned very easily in later years.

Speaking two languages is like any other skill. To do it well, children need lots of practice which parents can help to provide. Without practice, it may be difficult for children to understand or talk to people in both languages.

You may now ask how can children be taught to be bilingual. One sure way is to use two languages from the start. For example, the mother tongue of the child could be used regularly at home while the second language can be used regularly in the school. If it is at school, more than two languages can be used. For example, the French teacher could speak in French regularly to the child while the class teacher speaks in English regularly.

Children should be given opportunities to hear and practice using both languages. Such opportunities should include:

(i)   Conversation about interesting topics that constitute occasions to use relevant words. Talking during meals or while riding the bus or in the car generates language gains.

(ii)   Book reading can be a rich source of new vocabulary and discussion of topics that might never otherwise come up. Book reading though, benefits children's language more if it is interactive, giving the child a lot of chance to talk.

(iii)   Quality of preschool settings is another key in promoting children's language development.   Having a real, content-rich language curriculum can be a genuine help in the endeavour.

(iv)   Story telling

It has been observed that some Nigerian parents are biased about the use of the mother tongue in favour of English language, the Nigerian lingua franca. They prefer their children to be monolingual using English both at home and at school. They believe this to be aid to success in schoolwork. Other Nigerians believe that two languages may cause speech or language problem. Children all over the world learn more than one language without developing speech or language problems. Bilingual children develop language skills just as other children do.

Exercise

1   People who can use two languages are said to be _____ (bilingual)

2.   Explain why children can learn more than one language easily at the same time.

Answer

- They are motivated to communicate.
- They like to conform.
- They are not xenophobic.
- They are not set in their ways.
-
3. Explain how you could foster bilingualism.

Answer: Providing opportunities for

- conversation
- book reading
- quality pre-school programme.

3.3   English Language in the Early Years

In Nigeria, the second language is English for most people. The origin of English language into the Nigerian school curriculum dates back to the introduction of Western formal education in Nigeria in mid 19th century when the first primary school was established in Badagry. It was the missionaries that brought Western formal Education to Nigeria. It was a means to an end. Schools were established to equip the converts with the skills of reading the Bible, singing hymns and reciting the catechism. English language thus occupied a prime position in the school curriculum and it became the Nigerian National Language or Lingua Franca and the second language of most Nigerians.

Why English is Nigerian Lingua Franca

First, there was the urgent need to equip converts to Christianity with communication skills in English for evangelism purposes. Later when the explorers and the colonial administrators came as a result of the opening up of the country, the demand increased and there was a rapid development of the language. The importance of English in Nigeria derives mainly from its utilitarian value to the colonial masters for purposes of administration and commerce. English thus became the official language of administration and commerce. This resulted in the de-emphasising the multi-lingual, multi-ethnic character of the Nigerian nation which has over three hundred well identified languages. Although one would have wished that Nigeria's national language was a Nigerian language, the global importance of English makes it an important tool of communication in Nigeria.

Currently, in Nigeria, English is one of the most important school subjects. It is a core subject both at the pre-primary and primary levels of education. It is also a school subject at this level as well as a medium of instruction in primary school beginning from primary four. Apart from its global importance, English is also of national significance in Nigeria. It serves as a unifying factor in a country with so many languages. Because of its global and national significance, it is very important that every Nigerian child is given adequate opportunity to learn and use the English Language in addition to learning and using his mother tongue. To have it otherwise would limit the Nigerian child's opportunities to interact with others outside his ethnic and linguistic environment. The ability of using English widens the horizon of the Nigerian child.

3.4   National Language Policy

The Federal government policy on education stipulates that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment for the first few years of primary school. It is necessary that the initial medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically this makes sense because in his mind, words automatically form expression and understanding. Sociologically it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which the child belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar language (UNESCO, 1953).

In recent times, several writers and educators have already articulated the need for the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in Nigeria. Afolayan (1973), Awoniyi (1979), Fafunwa (1977), Ubahakwe (1980), Bajah, Onocha, Apkala (1983), Obemeata (1987) are examples among many others.

As desirable as this policy statement is, there are some technical and pedagogical problems associated with the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in Nigeria. Such problems include that

1. Few Nigerian languages have developed orthography for writing them.

2. Very few of the languages have textbooks written in them. In other words, school subjects are not written in Nigerian languages especially for the pre-primary level.

3. There are sometimes conceptual problems resulting from the differences in the mode of thought in Nigerian languages and in English.

To solve some of the above problems, the Federal government plans to:

(a) Develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages;

(b) Produce textbooks in Nigerian languages. Some of these developments are already being pursued by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).

Despite the educational policy on the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, many Nursery schools in Nigeria use English as a medium of teaching and learning. The proprietors of these private nursery schools argued that, it is the desire of their clients to see their wards proficient in English language and they have to satisfy their clients.

The other reason why the Nursery schools use English in spite of the National Policy is that English is the language of business and transaction. It is the language of examination, interviews and textbooks. It follows that the sooner one learns English language, the more advantaged one is.

Question

What is your position about the use of mother tongue in teaching the Nigerian child.

Exercise

What are the problems militating against the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in Nigerian schools?

Answer

1. Only few Nigerian languages have developed orthography for writing the language, a majority are yet to be developed.

2. Many of the languages do not have textbooks written in them.

3. There are some conceptual problems resulting from the differences in the mode of thought in Nigerian languages and in English.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Anyone can learn a new language but children find it easier than adults to learn a new language. This is because children are motivated to communicate more often than adults. They like to conform and they are not set in their ways like adults. They opportunities are provided through conversation, book reading and quality pre-school programme, children master the mother tongue and any other language very well.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit you learnt about bilingualism, mother tongue and English and the issues involved in children's acquisition of these in the early years.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1.   Discuss the importance of bilingualism for a Nigerian child.

2.   Why will you advocate the use of mother tongue in the early years?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 2

THEORIES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Unit 1   Behaviourist Theory of Language Acquisition
Unit 2   Vygotsky's Cultural/Cognitive Theory of Language
              Acquisition
Unit 3   Maturationist Theory of Language Acquisition

Unit 1:   Behaviourist Theory of Language Acquisition

CONTENT

1.0   Introduction
2..0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
       3.1   Behaviourist Theory
       3.1.1 The Behaviourist View About Language Acquisition
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Readings (TMA)

1.0   INTRODUCTION

A theory is a systematic attempt to organize and interpret observations. A theory is best judged not in terms of accuracy and truthfulness but in terms of how well it reflects the facts, how consistent it is and how useful it is for explaining observed <u>phenomenon and predicting future phenomenon.</u>.

Behaviourist theory tries to explain simple behaviours that are observable and predictable responses. Accordingly, it is concerned mainly with conditions called stimuli that affect organisms and which lead to modified behaviours called responses. For this reason, behaviouristic theory is often referred to as stimulus-response (S-R) theory or as associationistic theory.

In this unit, we shall examine in details the behaviourist theory as it relates to language acquisition in the early years.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define what behaviourist theory is;
- explain Skinner's principles of operant conditioning
- discuss the relevance of the theory to language development.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   Behaviourist Theory

By definition, behaviourists are concerned with behavour. They define learning, language learning for example, in terms of changes in behavior and look to the environment for explanations of these changes. Their theory is associationistic, that is their theory deals with connections or associations that are formed between stimuli and responses . According to the behaviourist theory of stimulus-response learning, particularly the operant conditioning model of Skinner, all learning is regarded as the establishment of habits as a result of reinforcement or reward. What is meant by reinforcement or reward is any form of encouragement which leads to the formation of a behaviour or habit. Skinner, the major proponent of this theory, held that habits or behaviours are established when reward or reinforcement follows immediately on the occurrence of an act. Encouragement for example could be in form of praise, gift, applause, or any form of gesture implying approval.

The behaviourist theory of learning influenced teaching and learning a lot in the late 60's and early 70's. The influence was particularly felt in the field of teaching and learning native (first language) and second or foreign language. In the the next section of this unit, we will learn about this influence.

Exercises

1   Explain the behaviourist theory.

2.   Who is the chief proponent of the theory?

Answers

1.   The behaviourist theory deals with connections or associations that are formed among stimuli and responses.

2.   B.F. Skinner

3.1.1 The Behaviourists View of Language Acquisition

Skinner expressed his view of the language learning theory in his book titled Verbal Behaviour (1957). This book contains the seed of his language learning theory. According to him, many human behaviors or responses including language are reactions to stimuli. He propounded that the rate of producing a particular reaction or response can be increased if it is immediately followed by a reinforcing stimulus. Stimulus when consistently presented following a response an operant behavior will substantially increase the frequency of occurrence. Whenever the reinforcement is discontinued, the rate of responding decreases and finally leads to extinction. According to Skinner, the babbling behavior of babies is an operant and when parents selectively reinforce those that sound like the sounds of adult this language causes the baby to produce more of such sounds more frequently. Skinner believed that the child knows when the sounds he produces resemble the sounds of adult language and so he reinforces himself. So according to Skinner, language can be acquired through self- reinforcement together with reinforcement from others.

The behaviourists believe that as the child is rewarded or reinforced by approving noises or smiles, praise etc, the probability that the same grouping of sounds will be emitted by the child in a similar situation is increased. As children continue to imitate particular sounds, they acquire more sound combinations while later with more reinforcement develop into two, three syllable words and gradually to many more complicated words and sentences. As children acquire more of the syntactic and morphological variations of the language, they produce new combinations of words, phrases and sentences by the process of generalization or analogy. According to the behaviourists, sometimes, the child do make mistakes by producing analogies which are not permissible in that language. Whenever this happens, reward is withheld. Thus by a trial and error process, in which acceptable utterances are reinforced and unacceptable utterances are not rewarded, children gradually learn to make finer and finer discriminations. Gradually by this process, they get to making utterances that resemble more and more the speech of their community.

The behaviourist view of language learning was adopted by the audio-lingual methodologists who applied it to language teaching and learning. It led them to the use of teaching techniques referred to as mimicry –

memorization, which are in form of dialogue used for teaching structural patterns of the language. Learners learn language structures to a point of automatic response to a language stimulus. This gave rise to the development of structural patterns in language text books. Here is an example for teaching forms of the verb "to go":

I	go	to the market everyday
She/He	goes	" " " "
We	go	" " " "
They	go	" " " "

The emphasis is on memorization of the dialogues containing commonly used everyday expressions and basic structures of high frequency. The vocabulary is highly controlled by being kept to a useful minimum so that the learner concentrates on acquiring the grammatical structures in the dialogues. The audio lingual methodologists believe in controlling the learners process of learning by controlling <u>what</u> and <u>how</u> learners learn a language. Whether for purposes of teaching oral language or reading or writing, the audiolenguists will apply this controlling measure thereby not allwing the learners to manipulate and explore language spontaneously. This is restrictive and fails to recognise and acknowledge the innate ability of human beings to be creative in language use.

Exercise

In a sentence or two, summarise the language learning theory of Skinner.

Answer

Skinner believes that to learn a language, the child is passively responding to environmental stimuli and so language acquisition is primarily as a result of reinforcement initiated by others and not the result of the child's own pursuits and active intention.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Theories form a sound basis for teaching and learning. The behaviourists' theory proved relevant to the explanation of language acquisition processes

in the early years. As a teacher of children, you should be conversant with this theory and use it as the need arises.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you learned that the behaviourists explain simple behaviours that are observable as responses to stimulus. They explained that learning is a change in behavior. You have studied the operant conditioning of Skinner where you have come across many terms such as reinforcement, reward, stimuli, etc. You are aware of the fact that B.F. Skinner declared that language can be acquired through stimulus-response. You learnt that the behaviourist theory influenced the audio-lingual method of teaching language.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1.   Discuss in details the theory of stimulus-response-reinforcement.

2.   Explain the relevance of this theory to language learning in the early years. Give at least two points.

3.   Is language really a matter of habit formation theough stimulus-response process? Support your view with two reasons.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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Unit 2:   Vygotsky's Cultural/Cognitive Theory

CONTENT

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we learned about Skinner's operant conditioning theory as it relates to language development in the early years. In this unit, we shall examine another theory based on culture and propounded by Vygotsky as it relates to language develoment in the early years.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

(a) explain the theory of Vygotsky;
(b) discuss the basis of the theory; and
(c) discuss the implication of his theory to language development in the early years.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   Vygotsky's Cultural/Cognitive Theory

Leu Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who belonged to the constructivists school of thought. He believed that language is both genetically determined and environmentally influenced. In the biological sense, humans have the innate ability to communicate through language. Young children make use of this ability as they respond to sounds in their environment.

According to Vygotsky, infants begin to develop speech without understanding that its purpose is to communicate. Instead, they develop a kind of inner speech that only gradually becomes connected to external communication. It is the adults in their environment who encourage the

transition from speech as a private toy to speech as a social tool. The first step in this transition process begins when children begin to understand something of what adults say to them even if they are unable to communicate themselves. With repeated interactions, children begin to pick up adult meanings and use them making the adult role less necessary.

Three themes underline Vygotsky's theory. The first theme is the importance of culture, the second is the central role of language and the third is the importance of proximal growth.

Exercises

1. Vygotsky believed that language is both genetically determined and environmentally influenced. Yes/No.

2. Name the three components of Vygotsky's theory.

Answers

1. Yes

2. Culture, central role of language and zone of proximal growth.

3.1.1 The Basis of Vygotsky's Theory

(i)   The Importance of Culture

Human development says Vygotsky, is fundamentally different from that of animals. Humans use tools and symbols as a result, they create cultures. Cultures have powerful influence on human development. He said that cultures have a life of their own. Cultures grow and change and they exert tremendous powerful influences on the people. Cultures specify what the end product of a successful human development is. Cultures determine what people have to learn, the sorts of competencies they need to develop. People are not only culture producing but also culture produced.

Vygotsky made an important distinction between what he called "elementary mental functions" and "higher mental functions". Elementary functions are people's natural and therefore unlearned capacities such as attending and sensing. In the course of development, these elementary capacities are gradually transformed into higher mental functions such as problem solving and thinking largely through the influence of culture. It is culture after all that makes language possible and it is social processes that

bring about the learning of language. Language or signs ultimately make thoughts possible and these thoughts are transmitted or communicated by members of a community through oral or written forms of language. What to say and how to say it appropriately in various situations and for various purposes are dictated by the culture of the people that own a particular language. From early years therefore, children are controlled by the culture to understand that there are words, phrases and expressions appropriate for given situations and when talking to fellow children and adults.

(ii) The Role of Language

Language makes thought possible and regulates behaviour. Vygotsky described three stages in the development of the function of speech in children namely social, egocentric and inner stages of speech development.

(a)   **Social speech or external speech** emerges first before age 3. Its function is largely to control the behaviour of others or to express simple and sometimes poorly understood concepts. The child at this point uses langugage to get the attention of adults for instance to do things for him. For example, a child asks for food and other needs.

(b)   **Egocentric speech** predominates from age 3 to age 7. It serves as a bridge between the primitive and highly public social speech of the first stage and the more sophisticated and highly private inner speech of the third stage. During this stage, children often talk to themselves in apparent attempt to guide their own behaviours. For example, they might speak about what they are doing as they do it. Unlike older children, however, they are likely to say things out (externalize) rather than silently, as though they believe that if language is to direct behaviour it must be spoken.

(c)   **Inner Speech** to Vygotsky, inner speech is silent self-talk. It is characteristic of older children as well as adults. It is the stream of consciousness. Our self-talk or inner speech is what tells us that we are alive and conscious. It permits us to direct our thinking and our behaviours. More than this, it makes all higher mental functioning possible. Higher mental functioning involves activities such as thinking, perceiving, organising and remembering. These functions originate in social activities and are inseparably linked with language, which is also a social phenomenon. In a very real sense, these higher mental functions define intelligence. From egocentric speech. Children move on to inner speech. With adult help they develop their abilities to think, perceive or guess and remember.

(iii)   The Importance of Proximal Growth

The third theme that underlied Vygotsky's theory of language development is what he referred to as reaching the zone of proximal growth in every child. He explained that one of his strong interests was in maximizing intellectual development. He was far less interested in measuring past accomplishments or in assessing current levels of functioning than in arriving at some notion of a child's potential for future development. He believed that every child has a sphere or a zone of current capabilities which adults such as parents, teachers, older children can positively influence for maximum growth by providing excellent opportunities in home and schools.

Exercises

1. Name the three components of Vygotsky's theory.

2. What is his view about language, that is, how did he define language?

Answers

1. - The importance of culture
       - The role of language and
       - Proximal growth

2. He defined language as a tool which makes thought possible and regulates behaviour.

3.1.2 Educational Implications of Vygotsky's Theory

Several educational implications can be derived from the theory of Vygotsky.

1. The theory highlights the importance of language in the development of higher mental functions. He believed very strongly that language is a social and cultural phenomenon that is centrally involved in the development of thinking. He advised that schools should do a great deal to enhance the development of cognitive processes by paying special attention to the development of languages.

2. The theory stressed that cognitive development is profoundly influenced by cultural and social environments. Specifically to the extent that the

environment requires that the child performs at a level slightly in advance of current developmental level, progress will be enhanced. Vygotsky suggested that the level at which instruction and questions are phrased is extremely important. The essence of his theory is that adult members of the child's culture e.g. parents, teachers should help the child develop to his maximum capacity.

Exercises

Discuss the place of language in Vygotsky's theory.

Answers

4. Language occupies a central place in Vygotsky's theory
5. Language is a social phenomenon
6. He emphasized the importance of culture in the development of a child's language.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Vygotsky's social and cognitive developmental theory underscores the role of culture and its most important invention, language in the development of higher mental functions. Without culture, he argues our intelligence would be comparable to that of apes hence the fundamental role of education is cultural transmission.

5.0   SUMMARY

Vygotsky's cultural/cognitive theory stressed the importance of culture and of its principal invention, language. Without culture, our intelligence functioning is limited to , elementary mental functions. Given culture and language, we become capable of higher mental functions involved in thinking, reasoning and remembering. The child progresses through three stages in developing language functions: social (external) speech, predominant before age 3 to 4 used largely to control others or to express simple concepts; egocentric speech (ages three to seven) which is self-talk that is spoken out loud and that has a role in controlling and directing the child's own behaviour; and inner speech marked by unspoken verbalizations that control his thoughts and behaviour.

His zone of proximal growth is the child's potential for future development from the current level of mental functioning. He emphasized the importance of assessing potential rather than simply measuring past

accomplishments. His theory presents a strong argument for language related activities in schools and for instruction to enhance pupils' zone of proximal development.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

(a) Explain the theory of Vygotsky as it relates to children's language development.

(b) How relevant is the theory to the Nigerian child?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3:   MATURATION   THEORY   OF   LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

CONTENT

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
       3.1   Maturation Theory of Language Development
              3.1.1 Language Learning Principles Based on Maturation Theory
              3.1.2 Implications of Maturation Theory in Early Years
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings
8.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The maturation theory regards development as the inevitable unfolding of events determined internally by the forces of genetics and the neuro maturational processes directed by the genes. This theory dates back to the 18th and 19th Century thinkers. In this unit, you will learn about the model in details and relate your knowledge of this theory to language development in the early years.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define what maturational theory means.
- Describe the various views of the maturationist thinkers and
- Explain the language learning principles underlying the theory of maturation.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   Maturation Theory of Language Development

The late 60's and early 70's witnessed great criticism of Skinner's Theory of Stimulus-Response or behaviour modification through reinforcement or

reward. The criticism was as a result of emerging beliefs about the nature of language and language learning. These beliefs came from developments in cognitive psychology that recognised the innate mental capacities of human beings. As a result of this view of cognitive development of human beings, a new theory of language development emerged. This new theory, propounded especially by Chomsky (1960) and Lenneberg (1960), rejected the behaviourist view of language learning which was based on Skinner's S-R theory. These theorists argued that certain aspects of native-language learning (learning of mother tongue) made it impossible to accept Skinner's theory of habit-formation-by-reinforcement. Chomsky (1965) for instance hypothesized that language was not acquired by children through a form of conditioning dependent on reinformcement or reward. He argued that human beings are endowed with innate language-learning abilities in the form of language acquisition device (LAD) which proceeds by hypothesis testing. In the process of learning a language, children make hypotheses (guesses) and compare these with their innate knowledge of possible grammars based on the principles of universal grammar. In this manner, the child's competence or internalised knowledge of the grammar of the language, is built up. This competence according to Chomsky is what makes language use or performance possible. He noted that language use is therefore a rule-governed behaviour which enables language users to create new utterances (phrases, sentences etc) which conform to the rules they have internalised.

Lenneberg (1967) one of the psychologists who studied the process of language acquisition among many children all over the world, discovered that there is a consistent, regular and fixed developmental pattern of language in all normal children. This pattern he called 'milestones'. He believed that the milestones occur at the same time and in the same sequence all over the world regardless of the cultural environment of the child. He believed that the progress in language development is genetically determined and maturational in nature.

Exercises

1. What is maturation theory?

2. Compare the behaviourist view of language learning with that of maturationist view.

Answer

1. Maturational theory regards development as the inevitable unfolding of event determined internally by the forces of genetics and the neuro maturational processes directed by the genes.

3.1.1 Language Learning Principles Based on Maturation Theory

Learning a language does not just consist of learning a lot of words. Rather, children must also learn how to combine them in phrases and sentences. They must learn verb forms, possessives, plurals, etc. How children do this has adequately been explained in 3.1 by the views of Chomsky and Lenneberg.

A Research Report on children's Process of Language Development

Let us examine the experiment carried out by a psychologist named Braine. He asked two mothers to write down all the "spontaneous utterances" of their children over a period of several months. That is, they noted only those word combinations that were not direct imitations of something the children had heard before (the children were at the stage where they were combining two words). Braine found that there were systematic regularities to the children's speech. The children used certain key words again and again in different word combinations but the key words were always used in the same way. For example, a child at the stage of two letter word will always say 'see dog', 'see boy', 'all gone'. Such a child will not say 'see all gone', or 'all gone see'. These findings show that children's early sentences reveal certain systematic regularities.

As a result of these regularities in children's two-word sentences, Braine concluded that even young children are using specific though simplified rules in constructing new sentences. Another example is the fact that children use such words as 'big' only in front of a noun 'big car', 'big man', 'big dog' and never in front of a verb 'big go', 'big see'. This demonstrates the fact that they are using some grammatical rule.
You should also note that young children's speech is not exactly like the speech of adults. Children's earliest grammar is very simple. Children are not yet ready to deal with the complexities of adult language and so make up their own set of rules as a sort of stop-gap measure. Young children's rules are almost always simpler than adult rules. When adults supply young children with a correct grammatical statement, the children usually simplify

the rules to suit their own needs. For example, if an adult asks a 2½ or 3 year old child to repeat this statement

Adult: Let me go to the store

Child: 'Me go store'

Note however that children eventually learn adult grammatical rules in an ingenious way by the ages 4 to 6. By this age, most children have mastered most fundamental rules of adult grammar.

As observed by Chomsky and Lenneberg, children's early grammatical errors demonstrate that language acquisition is a process of rule-learning rather than word learning or simple imitation of adult speech. An analysis of children's errors revealed that children often overgeneralise a rule they have learned and apply it in cases where it is not correct. For example when a child says "I goed to the store" or "I digged a hole", she is imitating adult speech but overgeneralising the rule application to form past tense. Making these sentences, the child is demonstrating that she understands a rule for foming the past tense of the verbs, go and dig.

Researchers revealed that three important operating principles have helped to explain children's early speech. These operating principles include:

- paying attention to word endings
- paying attention to the order of words and word segments and
- using overgeneralisation of rules

Telegraphic Speech refers to a child's tendency to use only two or three most important words to express meaning. E.g. a child says "mommy, rice" rather than "mommy, I would like to have some rice".

In Yoruba for example, "mama, jeje" rather than "mama mo fe je ounje". This shows that telegraphic speech in different languages has many similarities. In virtually all languages, children's telegraphic speech is characterised by deletions of certain kinds of words such as articles (the, a, an), prepositions (in, on, under, through), conjunctions (and, but, because, when) and negatives. Here is an example of the case of avoidance of use of nagative. 'All gone' or 'bye-bye' may be used to express the non-existence or disappearance of an object.

Exercises

1. What is the evidence that even young children are applying rules in the construction of their two-word sentences?

2. When adults supply young children with a correct grammatical statement the children……………………………

Answers

1. Their two-word sentences show certain systematic regularities; certain words are always used in the same way; certain combinations of words never occur even though the child knows both words.

2. Streamline and simplify the rules to suit their own needs.

3.1.2 Implications of Maturation Theory in Early Years

The theory of maturation emphasises that language learning is dependent on the maturation of innate mental capacities of a child. As the child matures or develops mentally and physically, he learns the language of his community acquisition of the underlying rules governing the use of the language. This has a number of implications for teaching children language in the early years. First of all, we should not <u>force</u> the child to learn features or structures of the language. This is because, the child naturally learns these when he reaches the appropriate mental age to do so. Secondly, we must not overemphasise that the child uses correct forms of language when he makes errors. This is because he can correct himself with time as he interracts with others in this environment.

Exercise

Mention and describe other implications of this theory in language learning in early years.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Many psychologists who study young children's acquisition of language believe that children are born with a mechanism or device that is capable o processing all the language sounds around them. This innate mechanism is called a language acquisition system or language acquisition devise. The psychologists believe that this is possible only because children are programmed to analyse language data in a certain way.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learned about the maturation theory of language acquisition, that behaviors depend entirely on neurological and physical maturation. That human language is made possible by special adaptations of the human mind and body that occurred in the course of human development during early childhood. Parents and teachers should explore ways of helping children develop fully their innate abilities.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1. i.   In your own words, explain the theory of maturation in language development.
   ii.   Compare the behaviourist view of language learning with the maturation view of language learning. Give at least two points.

2. i.   Which of these two is a better option to choose in teaching language in early years.
   ii.   Use only one view. Give two reasons to support your answer.
   iii.   Use all views namely: Culture, behaviourist and maturation theories. Give two reasons to support your answer.

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MODULE 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY IN THE EARLY YEARS

Unit 1   Reading, its Importance and the abilities needed to Learn it.
Unit 2   Pre-reading Activities and Reading Readiness
Unit 3   Approaches for Teaching Reading
Unit 4   Organisation of Reading Instruction

Unit 1:   READING, ITS IMPORTANCE AND THE ABILITIES NEEDED TO LEARN IT

CONTENT

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
         3.1   What is Literacy?
                  3.1.1   What is Reading?
                  3.1.2   The Abilities Needed in the Process of Learning to Read.
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

World leaders consider the ability to read of extreme importance. When Voltaire posed for himself the question of who was to lead mankind, he remarked "Those who know how to read and write". Another leader Thomas Jefferson once wrote "People who can read can be free because reading banishes ignorance and superstition". Young children are like sponges. Every day, they learn skills that will help them become readers. Children become aware of books and print and learn about sounds and letters. In this unit, you shall be learning about this important subject, literacy, that is the ability to read and use written information.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define literacy
- Explain the meaning of reading
- discuss the effects of reading abilities on reading

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   What is Literacy?

Literacy is language in use – in speaking, listening, reading, viewing and writing. Literacy is the ability to read and use written information appropriately in a range of contexts, for instance to speak or acquire information to develop critical thinking. Being literate enables children to construct meaning from print.

During the first three years, young children begin to learn about print and writing and how oral language is reflected in written symbols. Literacy skills are promoted and supported directly or indirectly through play, reading books, scribbling, oral communication and interaction with adults and other children.

Exercises

1. The following skills are involved in literacy –   Speaking
                                                          Listening
                                                          Reading
                                                          Viewing and
                                                          Writing

True or false

Answer: True

2. Literacy is the ability of children to construct meaning from print. Yes/ No.

Answer: Yes

Children develop literacy skills through (1)……..(2)…….and (3)………….

3.1.1 What is Reading?

In our attempt to explain the meaning of literacy, we identified some skills. Try and remember the skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. The first two of these skills namely listening and speaking are regarded as oratory skills and they are involved in oral language. However, the other skills – that is reading and writing are traditionally classified as literacy skills. We shall examine what reading is and its importance in this section of the unit.

The Benefits of Reading

Reading is the ability to construct meaning from written materials. We read to get information and use it for various benefits.

1. Teaching children to read has always been one of the most important responsibilities of the pre-primary and primary school. Every child needs to develop his/her reading ability fully in order to succeed in school and to discharge his/her responsibilities later as a citizen of a society.

2. Reading is the foundation of much of the enjoyment the individual gets out of life and is closely related to vocational efficiency.

3. Reading opens up marvelous vistas for those who possess sufficient skills and are willing to use them. Skilled reading offers a gateway to ideas and information that have the power to improve the self and the world.

4. Reading is magical. Reading can transport one to worlds unknown, reveal aspects of the inner self previously undiscovered and raise possibilities unimagined.

5. Reading is powerful. It can promote civic consciousness, deepen empathy and connections to others, foster civic engagement, and rouse us from complacency.

6. Reading is transforming. It can promote personal development and strengthen or cause us to rethink cherished attitudes and strongly held opinions. It can engender quiet reflection, and move one to action.
7. Reading is comforting. It can foster acceptance of one's own foibles and those of others. It helps us reconcile ourselves to things we can neither change nor control.

8. Reading is mysterious. It can energize the spirit, tickle the imagination, stir passions and give a deep pleasure.

9. Its importance cannot be overstated. Without the ability to read, full participation and competent functioning in a modern society is made much more difficult. For some, this gateway is narrow, impeded or entirely closed off.

Exercise

1. What is reading?

2. List five benefits of reading.

Answers

1. Reading is the understanding of information contained in a written material.

3.1.2 The Abilities Needed in the Process of Learning to Read

Learning to read no doubt involves a number of different skills and abilities. The learner needs to see the shapes of letter and words on a page and to understand that those shapes have meaning and represent the language he/she speaks. We can easily see therefore that reading is a complex activity that draws on a wide variety of abilities within the child. We shall now consider some of the abilities and skills that are necessary for a child to be able to learn to read under the following general headings.

1. Intelligence
2. Language facility
3. Visual abilities
4. Auditory abilities and
5. Emotional factors

1.   Intelligence

It is common knowledge that intelligence is the innate ability to learn and understand that is present in every individual. All humans are endowed with this ability in varying measures. The nature of this ability and how far we can estimate its extent in any individual is very much a matter for controversy. The reason for this is the fact that in knowing the true extent of this ability for any test we can devise to estimate it will inevitably have to draw its result via activities which will involve environmental and emotional factors.   It is difficult therefore to estimate how great the importance of intelligence or general ability in the process of learning to read is. However, experience leads us to the conclusion that on the average at least children who seem to be poorly endowed with intelligence have more difficulty in mastering the process of learning to read than those who are well endowed. Research results showed that retardation in reading is more prevalent in those of below average mental ability than in those who have above average ability.

However, there is some evidence that mental age is of more importance than intelligence quotient in predicting reading success. Mental age can be said to apply to the level of maturation reached by any child at a given moment of time. Various skills mature at different speeds and different ages and as reading employs a variety of abilities and skills, the maturation level given by mental age will refer to only part of the whole picture. Therefore, we must not make the mistake of expecting a one to one correspondence between mental age and reading attainment, for if we do this we will prevent children who are capable of going beyond this level from doing so and probably make school a miserable place for the child who is not capable of raising his reading attainment to his general mental level.

2. Language Facility

Good language development is essential for effective reading development. A rich knowledge of vocabulary and the ability to use language orally is basic to the process of learning to read. This is what is referred to as having language facilities. A child who understands and speaks a language will very likely learn to read easily.

Language facility is closely related to general ability on the one hand but on the other is very much open to the effects of environmental influences. Oral language development can be enhanced or retarded by the environment in which the child is placed. The child who commences school having spent his first five years in a home where conversation has been at a high level, where his curiosity and enthusiasm have been

stimulated and his questions answered will have a decided advantage in reading over the child who has not been drawn into the household conversation nor had many experiences to excite his curiosity and his use oflanguage. Evidences abound that a poor social environment causes a general lowering of the child's potential in academic work. Also, a child who has a speech defect is more likely to have difficulty in learning to read than a child who is able to speak fluently.

Dialect variations, particularly with vowel sounds are considerable and may cause the child difficulty in that when the word is met, the child might not associate it with the same word in his own speech, nor in fact, ever get to the stage of knowing what a particular word really is. Think of a good example in your own language and imagine the difficulty a child reading English would have. Moreover, consonants are often heard incorrectly by children particularly the 'p' and 'th' sounds. The child is therefore less skilled in hearing speech sounds correctly so his understanding of word meanings is affected.

Ways of Fostering Language Facility

It is imperative for the teacher to foster speech development within the classroom if the child is going to make good use of the reading instruction given. This could be done by creating an atmosphere which will stimulate and encourage language in children. Firstly, the classroom must be interesting, even an exciting place to be in. Children have a natural curiosity and if fostered by a good supply of attractive objects and pictures which are frequently changed, then they will observe and wish to converse. Secondly, the teacher must give the children the opportunity to speak freely amongst themselves and also to her. The teacher must not only provide encouragement and a permissive atmosphere, she must also create an example by the clarity of her enunciation and the interesting situation which will help the child to use his language and his powers of constructive thought so that language development is encouraged.

3.   Visual Abilities

The ability to read is dependent on being able to see and distinguish the differences among words on a page. Visual abilities or skills are fourfold but all of course are interrelated.

(i)   Visual acuity
(ii)   Visual discrimination

(iii)   Left/right orientation and
(iv)   Visual memory

Visual Acuity

A child's ability to read print is closely connected with the quality of his sight. The quality of the child's sight (visual acuity) should be a priority for the teacher to check at the pre-reading stage when the child first comes to school. There is every reason for the teacher to be watchful for any child who shows signs of having visual difficulties. It is well therefore to be acquainted with the more common visual defects. Some of these are described below:

<u>Strabismus (Squint)</u>: This condition occurs when one eye becomes weak and no longer moves with the other eye. This may cause double vision and in extreme cases may result in the affected eye becoming useless. In minor cases, spectacles and exercises can often correct the condition and thus normal functioning can be restored.

<u>Myopia (Short Sightedness):</u> This condition is due to the refractive power of the lens of the eye being too strong thus focussing the image in front of the retina and producing blurred vision. Many children have this defect in a minor form and the teacher must note whether any of her pupils habitually hold their books very close to their eyes or have difficulty in seeing the blackboard. Sending such children to have their eyes tested at the earliest possible moment is important.. In all but the most serious cases, this condition can be overcome by the use of medicated glasses..

<u>Hypermetropia (long sightedness)</u>: This condition is caused by the lens of the eye having a weak refractive power so that the part of focus is in fact behind the retina. Again this defect is usually compensated for by the use of medicated glasses.

<u>Astigmatism</u>: This defect is caused by uneven curvature of the lens of the eye resulting in distortion of the image. For example a circle may appear as an eclipse.

Visual Discrimination

Whilst good eye sight is obviously the major priority, there are other sub-skills concerned with sight which are important if the child is going to learn to read. It is essential for example that the child is able to see differences in letter and word shape. This skill is called visual discrimination. This is the

ability to recognise differences and similarities. Activities where the child is asked to notice differences and recognise similarities in shapes and pictures and later in letters and words help the child to realise the importance of looking carefully at things.

Visual Memory

If the child is to remember words that he has seen when he begins to read, his ability to remember what he has seen (visual memory) will need to be good. In order to read, the child is not merely required to perceive words but also to recognise them.   He/she must be able to relate the new perception to previously perceived experiences. This involves some form of memorisation of words and or letters. Many young children seem to have some difficulty in achieving this and others proceed very slowly to add new words to their vocabulary. This can be improved if the child is given the opportunity to practice remembering by presenting various shapes, colours and words a child has heard of and seen in various activities.

Left-Right Orientation

English language and many others are read from left to right. Some other languages (e.g. Arabic) are read from right to left and some even from the bottom of the page to the top. When we read in the alphabet system (Roman) we move our eyes along the page from left to right. The child must learn to move his eyes as smoothly as possible along the line and avoid backward i.e. right to left movements.

When a child comes to learn to read, he/she must gain proficiency in this skill or he/she will be at a great disadvantage for a number of our letters are rotations or inversions of other letters e.g. 'b' and 'd' and 'n' and 'u'.

The majority of people are right-handed and right-eyed and it is more simple to read and much easier to write when the hand and the eye are moving away from the center of the body to the right. The left-handed and left-eyed child is at a slight disadvantage for he has to work across his/her body.

It is obvious that reading can never be fully efficient until the child has mastered this process of reading from left to right for order and direction are essential to a good standard of word recognition. To the young child who has not yet matured sufficiently to differentiate between an inverted object and one which is the right way up, the letters 'u' and 'n' will appear

identical.   Again, the child who has mastered neither skills will be hopelessly confused by the group of letters 'b', 'd', 'g', 'p' and 'q'. Such mistakes are very common among children at the infant stage and fortunately the difficulty does not seem to be of such importance that it prevents reading progress.

4.   Auditory Abilities

The child's contact with language during his early years comes entirely through the sense of hearing. If for some reason the child's hearing is defective or the speech he hears is slurred and indistinct then his language growth will be delayed and his ability to discriminate between sounds will not be developed. Language development is dependent on the child being able to hear and imitate the sounds around him/her. Children learn quite early in life usually between 6 and 12 months to respond to words spoken to them with a fair degree of understanding but in this they are aided by gestures and intonation and only gradually do they become able to respond to words entirely on the basis of their meaning. There are enough evidences to show that speech defects in a child will result in retardation of his own language development and in his ability to appreciate the consistent sounds of the speech of others. It is much more difficult to notice a child with hearing problems than it is to be aware of visual difficulties. There may be no obvious indications to tell a teacher that the quality of hearing (auditory acuity) may be impaired.

The best way to check for a hearing problem is to listen to the child's spoken language. If the language is clear with precise pronunciation, then the child has heard the language accurately. If however the spoken language is indistinct and somewhat confused this could be the result of hearing loss.

5.   Emotional Abilities

Emotional factors seem to allow a division into two types namely attitudes to reading and general personality problems. Children with gross emotional problems have little interest in reading, rarely reading unless directed to do so.

Motivation is of the utmost importance for learning to read. The importance of the child having an understanding of his work and of the necessity of interest and apparent success are paramount.

Children who come into school with poor attitudes towards reading should better have their reading instruction process delayed in an effort to reorient the influences which their environment has had upon them.

Exercise

List the abilities that are involved in the process of learning to read.

Answer

1. Intelligence
2. Language facility
3. Visual abilities
4. Auditory abilities and
5. Emotional Abilities

4.0   CONCLUSION

During the early years, when children begin to learn about print and how oral language is reflected in written symbols, they need to acquire a number of abilities and skills to foster reading. Without these abilities, reading development is greatly hindered. Teachers and parents should monitor children to ensure that these abilities are nurtured by providing the right type of environment.

5.0   SUMMARY

The pre-reading stage refers to the period before the child begins to read. This is an important time if the difficult process of learning to read is to be introduced successfully. The necessary abilities to be acquired have been identified and discussed in details in this unit. These include: intelligence, language facility, visual and auditory abilities.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1.   What is reading?

2.   Identify at least three abilities needed for reading.

3   Discuss the three benefits of reading, in the early years.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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Unit 2:　　**PRE-READING　ACTIVITIES　AND　READING READINESS**

CONTENT

1.0　　Introduction
2.0　　Objectives
3.0　　Main Body
　　　　3.1　　Pre-reading Activities
　　　　　　　　3.1.1　Activities for Developing Language Facility
　　　　　　　　3.1.2　Activities for Developing Visual Skills
　　　　　　　　3.1.3　Activities for Developing Auditory Skills
　　　　　　　　3.1.4　What is Reading Readiness?
4.0　　Conclusion
5.0　　Summary
6.0　　Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0　　References/Further Readings

1.0　　INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1 of Module 3, we identified the abilities needed for learning how to read. These abilities include intelligence, language facility, visual and auditory abilities and emotional factors. In this unit, we shall be discussing some practical activities that parents and teachers could use to enhance the development of these abilities. We shall also discuss the concept of reading readiness.

2.0　　OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

▪ Name and describe practical activities that will enhance language facility, visual and auditory abilities.
▪ Discuss what reading readiness is;
▪ Explain what to observe and how to observe some traits in children to ascertain that they are ready to commence reading.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Pre-reading Activities

Learning to read is facilitated when children are exposed to a variety of pre-reading activities. The teacher therefore needs to take every care to ensure success by providing appropriate practical activities for the children. A period of time where the child is given considerable support by providing these practical activities, motivation and reinforcement usually prove helpful. It is important that the pre-reading practical activities are not hurried and that they are taken seriously by both the teacher and the children. Here are a number of pre-reading activities for preparing children for reading.

3.1.2 Activities for Developing Language Facility

Before a child can learn to read in a language, he must first be able to use and understand that language when it is spoken. In Nigeria, English language is our second language (L2) and a majority of our children come to the primary school at the age of six (that is the statutory primary school age) and come in contact with English language for the first time. The first task of the teacher would be to introduce the children to oral English, namely speaking and comprehension.

The following language activities can be used to encourage pupils to practice listening and speaking.
Story telling
Drama
Pictures
Drawing and painting
Curiosity corners
Walks and visits

Story Telling

Children get great enjoyment from listening to stories whether they are told or read. Very simple stories with lots of illustrations should be introduced. This gives the child confidence in his understanding of the new language and this gives him a sense of achievement. Children enjoy stories about animals and birds and moral.

It is not enough to select interesting stories, it is important the form it takes in telling the story. A series of pictures can be built up as the story

progresses to illustrate. Real objects may also help to make the story more vivid for the children to stimulate their interest and imagination.

Drama

Drama, like play is a very natural activity for children. By acting out observed situations in their play, children explore the world around them. The use of drama even in a very limited way also provides more interest and children's involvement. Just getting them to represent the characters in a story can be enough in second language situation. They can be given simple lines to repeat. Demonstration of simple stories involving characters, name labels can be attached to children to show which characters they are playing. Scenery of a makeshift nature can also be supplied and labelled.

The aim of all story telling and drama is to provide enjoyment and stimulation for conversation. This is dependent on the child's understanding and willingness to talk freely to the teacher and language development can more easily flourish. The teacher should ensure that every child is engaged in the ongoing activities whether story telling or drama.

Pictures

Pictures taken from books or drawn on the blackboard provide an easy way of getting the children to talk in a second language. Bright colourful pictures appeal to children best. Lively scenes of children, birds, animals and familiar environments stimulate conversation in the classroom. Short stories using folk tales and nursery rhymes can be used as the basis for the pictures. The use of picture sequences, that is series of pictures that fit together to create a situation or form a story, can provide the same encouragement for the use of language. Aremu (2002) found that one of the easiest ways that children can be motivated to read and enjoy reading is to provide them with books containing colourfully illustrated pictures. Picture reading can be done using cartoons, comics, flash cards, sketches, drawings and diagrams.

Drawing and Painting

These offer opportunities to involve children in conversation. Any picture drawn or painted by the child could generate questions, facilitate dialogues and story telling and would get the children to explain, discuss and argue their actions.

Curiosity Corners

Curiosity corners could be nature, reading, odd-job, etc. Each of these could be a collection of interesting objects, pictures, books, etc. They can be provided in the classroom to arouse interest and stimulate language development. The children can look at the objects or pictures in their own time as well as during the class time with the teacher or their peers.

Walks and Visits

Any journey made outside the classroom provides an additional point of interest and talk amongst the children. These 'visits' can simply be a walk in the immediate school environment or a more organized visit to a place of general interest – the park, zoo, airport, railway station, factory, market, museum, kings palace, tourist centers, etc. Such visits provide excitement and give the children a lot to talk about on their return.

Exercises

1. Explain the rationale for pre-reading activities

2. List three abilities you can use to develop pre-reading activities.

3. Name some practical activities that will foster language facility.

Answers

1. Pre-reading activities provide considerable support and are very helpful in fostering reading abilities.

2. Language skills, visual and auditory skills.

3. Story telling,
      Drama
      Pictures
      Drawing and painting
      Curiosity corners
      Walks and visits

3.1.2 Activities for Developing Visual Skills

You learnt in Unit I that the ability to read is dependent on being able to see and distinguish the differences between words. You learnt that children who find it difficult to see clearly will have great problems when learning to read, and that such children may need reading glasses to aid them to see clearly in order to minimize the problem of reading. There are two types of visual abilities: Visual discrimination and visual memory.

(i)   **Visual Discrimination:-** This is the ability to see similarities and differences. Activities where the child is asked to notice differences and recognise similarities in shapes, pictures and later in letters and words help the child to realise the importance of looking carefully at things.
Practical activities for visual discriminations include:
(a) Word-Picture sorting and matching
(b) Grouping objects, pictures or shapes into colour, size or shape
(c) The odd-man-out game
(d) Mixed-up pictures

(a)   **Sorting and Matching:**   Activities involved in sorting would demonstrate whether or not the child can see differences. Different shapes and colours could be mixed together and children are asked to match similar shapes or similar colours. They may also be asked to pick particular shapes and put them together or a particular colour. They can be asked for example to pick all red objects in the mixture or all triangles, etc.

(b)   **Grouping Objects:** This practical activity here could be the use of jigsaws – a jigsaw is a picture cut into pieces. It could be picture of animal, object or scene. The child is asked to match the pieces back together again. To do this, the child will have to be aware of the shape of the original picture and identify the edges and also match the colour and shapes in the picture.

(c)   **The odd-man-out game:** The child has to pick out the one picture or shape in the group that is different from the others in this game. Instruction(s) should always be given.

Examples

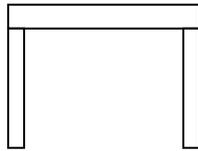Instruction: Circle the odd-shape
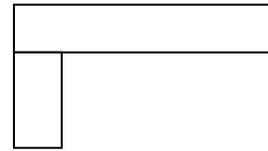
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(d) **The mix-up pictures:** In this activity, two pictures are given, one with complete parts and the other with some parts missing. The children are asked to locate the missing parts.

Complete picture   some parts are missing here

(ii) **Visual Memory:** The practical activities here give children an opportunity to practice remembering. The activities involve memorisation of pictures, shapes, objects, etc. The activities include:

- **Kim's Game:** A group of familiar objects are assembled on a table. The children are asked to look at the objects for a few seconds. The objects are then covered and the children are asked to name as many of the objects they have seen. The game can start with few objects and the number can be increased gradually. This game helps the children improve their visual memory.

- **Picture memory** – This is like the Kim's game. Here a picture is given to the children to see briefly. Then it is taken from them and you ask them to give details of the picture. This game could include letters, words or phrases depending on the age of the children.

Exercise

Name at least three (3) practical activities that can foster visual skills.

Answer

Sorting, grouping, odd-man-out, mix-up pictures.

3.1.3 Activities for Developing Auditory Skills

If a child needs to have acquired a reasonable ability in language before he can learn to read, it follows that at the pre-reading stage, the teacher needs to check if the child can hear well enough to be able to develop sufficient language.

Auditory skills can be sub-divided into two parts namely:

(i)   Auditory discrimination
(ii)   Auditory memory

(i)   **Auditory Discrimination:** The ability to hear differences in letter sounds and words is very important when learning to read. Many letter sounds are very similar to each other such as 'b' and 'd', 'd' and 't'. Auditory discrimination can be improved if children are given activities to help them concentrate on listening to differences in sounds.

Activities for auditory discrimination include:

(a) *Musical bottles*: Get some mineral bottles and put different quantities of water in each. Get a stick and hit each of the bottles, each of the bottles will give different sounds.
You can also use spice containers. Get them filled with sand, rice, beans, guinea corn, shake each container it will also give different sounds.

(b) *What is it?*: You can ask one child to blindfold the other children. Let the child that is not blind folded make a series of sounds with the following:

-        bounce a ball
-        strike a match stick
-        cut paper with a pair of scissors
-        write with chalk on the chalkboard.

Let the blind folded children give what the sounds are.

(c) *Rhymes and rhyming poems:* The use of rhymes can help the child to listen for specific sounds. Children enjoy the rhythm of poetry and generally learn rhymes easily. Children can identify words that give similar rhymes in a poem.

(d) *The whispering game:* In this game, the teacher whispers a sentence into the ears of a child, then the child whispers it into the next child's ear until it goes round the class. Then the teacher asks the last child to say the sentence aloud. The purpose of this is to find out whether the original sentence is still intact or has been distorted.

(e) *Nonsense sentences:* In this game, the teacher constructs nonsense sentences and writes them on the board. The children listen and explain the mistakes then the teacher writes the correct sentences on the black board.

For example,

- The ship is travelling on the rails.
- The leaf is eating the goat.
- The train travels on the rails
- The goat eats the leaf.

(ii) **Auditory Memory:** Previous activities discussed earlier are relevant here.

Exercises

1. Identify sub-skills that can be fostered under auditory ability.

- Auditory discrimination
- Auditory memory

2. Give two practical activities that can foster auditory discrimination

- Musical bottle
- Rhyme and rhyming
- What is this?
- Whispering game, etc

3.1.4 What is Reading Readiness?

The concept of reading readiness has its root in developmental psychology which views the development of a child as a gradual unfolding of the latent powers within. This view has been supported by recent research studies that say readiness to do such things as walking and talking appear at definite periods. The age limits for beginning these activities vary with individual children. The point of reading readiness varies with each child. It has been discovered that forcing a child to begin a specific activity before he is ready causes strain, develops negative attitudes and accomplishes little.

The term reading readiness refers to the point at which the child is ready to begin the process of learning to read. This means the point at which the child recognises and remembers that the symbols on the page represent meaningful sentences. Reading does not suddenly appear. It is subject to a process of development wherein each successive stage is built upon that which has gone before.

There is no doubt in the fact that factors influence readiness for reading. Such factors include visual factors, auditory factors, mental maturation, social and emotional factors, background of experience, language facility, etc. Although we have discussed many of these factors in details in the previous unit, let us remind ourselves of some of the salient points as they influence reading readiness.

1. *Visual factors:* Vision plays an important role in learning to read. Since reading involves receiving and interpreting visual stimuli, it is necessary for the child to have normal vision before he can read comfortably and with pleasure.

2. *Auditory factors:* Auditory acuity is a factor of vital importance to reading readiness. Defective hearing may retard speech development when it prevents the child from auditory discrimination among sounds. The inability to distinguish likeness and differences among sounds is closely associated with failure to learn to read.

3. *Mental maturity:* Some children do not have sufficient mental maturity to profit from a formal programme of reading instruction. Memory span, knowledge of words and their meaning, ability to see similarities and differences in objects and words and attention span are closely associated with mental maturity. Some research results indicate that a

child should have a mental age of at least six years before the commencement of reading.

4. *Social and emotional factors:* Some children are not well adjusted socially and emotionally to succeed in reading. The child who is unhappy, who has difficulty learning with other children and who lacks confidence in himself/herself may have a difficult time learning to read.

5. *Background Experience:* There is no single factor related to reading which has a greater effect on the ability of the child to read than his background experience. Children who have travelled widely and have been taught to observe closely, those who have attended pre-school, those who have books and magazines in abundance at home, those from homes where their parents read to them and tell them stories, and those encouraged to converse and dialogue will learn to read more easily and faster than those who lack these experiences.

6. *Language facility:* It is essential that children develop facility in the use of oral language. Oral language development is essential to success in learning to read because reading readiness involves the arousing of concepts and meanings for the printed symbols from the experiences which the child has had previously in listening and speaking.

Having discussed what reading readiness is and identified the factors that influence it, you may now ask how you would recognise when a child is ready to read. If this question has crossed your mind, then you have understood what has been presented to you on reading readiness.

In answering your questions, I will refer you to a list that has been compiled by psychologists titled checklist for Reading Readiness. It will help you to identify when a child is ready to read. To make the task easy for you, the list has been divided into sub-headings such as

(i)   physiological factors
(ii)   psychological factors
(iii)   social and emotional factors and
(iv)   background experience

CHECKLIST FOR READING READINESS

Physiological Factors

1. Is there evidence of good organic condition, good nutrition and good health habits?
2. Is there evidence of normal vision?
3. Does the child have good mental coordination when engaging in games?
4. Does he have normal amount of energy?
5. Does his hearing seem to be normal?
6. Does he respond quickly when spoken to?

Psychological Factors

1. Does the child have a wide speaking vocabulary?
2. Can he relate a personal experience in logical sequence?
3. Can he repeat from memory a rhyme or verse?
4. Can he listen attentively to a story?
5. Does he listen to directions and execute them accurately?
6. Does the child notice similarities and differences in objects, forms and colours?
7. Can he hear similarities and differences in sounds of words?
8. Does he have a normal span of attention?
9. Does he have curiosity about books, things and places?
10. Does he want to learn to read?

Social and Emotional Factors

1. Does the child enter into group activities?
2. Does he form friendships easily?
3. Does he assume responsibilities well?
4. Is he free from nervousness, worry, and excessive fears?
5. Can he work independently without too much help from the teacher?
6. Does he stay with a task until it is finished?
7. Can he take disappointments without undue display of emotions?

Background of Experience

1. Has the child visited parks, zoos, airports, museums and other places of interests.
2. Has he had many of the experiences he will read about?
3. Does he attend Sunday school or Koranic School?
4. Does the home have children's books and magazines?
5. Has he attended kindergarten?
6. Do his parents encourage initiative and independence?
7. Has he had experience with automobiles, trains, airplanes and buses?

8. Has he seen any movies?
9. Does the home have a radio or television set?

Exercise

Use this list to check for reading readiness of pre-school children in your neighbourhood. Rate the children 'high', 'average' and 'low'. You may experiment with only five children for a start. Make the exercise as informal as possible to get the best results.

Write a brief report after the experiment.

4.0   CONCLUSION

The purpose of providing practical pre-reading activities for the children is to extend and enrich their experiences, broaden and improve their interest and foster their personal and social adjustment through the various practical activities provided. There is little to be gained from rushing into a program of reading before there is evidence that the child is ready for it. Children need time to continue to grow to adjust and acquire experience that would help them to mature to the readiness point to read.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the pre-reading activities needed for the development of the abilities that will help children to acquire reading skills. We identified skills like oral language, visual and auditory skills as areas where practical activities should be provided. We defined reading readiness as the point at which the child recognises and remembers that the symbols on the page represent meaningful sentences. We agreed that reading does not suddenly appear but is subject to a process of development. We looked at factors that determine reading readiness to include visual, auditory, language facility, background experience, mental maturity and social and emotional factors.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1.   Name and describe three pre-reading activities in early years.

2.   (a) What is reading readiness?
            (b) Name and describe three things a child should be able to do to be considered ready to read.

3.   Name and describe three areas where you should assess a child's reading readiness.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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Unit 3:   APPROACHES FOR TEACHING READING

CONTENT

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
      3.1   What is Reading Approach?
           3.1.1 Reading Teaching Approaches and Criteria for selection.
           3.1.2 Visuo-phonic Approach
           3.1.3 Whole-word and Look/Say Approaches
           3.1.4 Language Experience Approaches
           3.1.5 Individual Reading Approach
           3.1.6 Eclectic or Mixed Method Approaches
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the last two units, you learnt what reading is, its importance and the abilities needed by a child to learn to read. You also learnt what reading readiness is and the activities needed for developing this. To help children acquire effectively the skill of reading, the teacher must put in place a well structured reading programme. One of the ways of ensuring this is to select appropriate teaching reading approaches.   In this unit, we shall be discussing what reading approaches are, the various reading approaches that can be used in a reading programme, their merits and demerits.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

▪ Describe what reading approach is,
▪ Name and describe some reading approaches,
▪ discuss the criteria to be considered in selecting reading approaches
▪ discuss the merits and demerits of the reading approaches you have selected.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   What is Reading Approach?

Some of the things we have learned that teachers should do to help children develop readiness for reading are organising trips and excursions for them, making them talk about what they see or do through conversation and dialogue, look at pictures and describe these orally. Other things teachers could get children to do are dramatising stories, matching words with pictures, sorting objects, seeing similarities and differences and playing reading-readiness games.   All these activities are emphasized because learning to read is not a simple process. It is perhaps the most difficult and complex task that children would encounter in the process of growing up. For this reason,   appropriate approaches for teaching reading must be selected by the teacher.

What is Reading Approach?

Reading approach is a way of teaching to make it meaningful for children to be able to read fluently.   Downing (1971) has suggested that many children are not naturally anxious to learn to read on entry to school. It is therefore the responsibility of the teacher to take care of this by creating an environment and atmosphere where reading can be seen to fulfil a useful purpose and be an enjoyable pursuit. The first step to this process is the right choice of appropriate approaches. The most important underlying factor in the choice of approaches is the individual needs of the children who are to be taught.

Reading teaching approaches to be discussed in this unit include visuo-phonic and linguistic approaches, whole-word and look/say approaches, language-experience approaches, eclectic or mixed method approaches.

3.1.1 Reading Teaching Approaches

There are substantial evidences from research and observation that there is no one language teaching approach that is outstandingly superior to the others. For an individual teacher and child one approach may be much more effective than any other but what is of real importance is the expertise of the teacher and the attitudes and the abilities of the child. In the choice of any of the approaches of teaching of reading, there are three major elements to be considered – the child, the teacher and the nature of the reading process. Each of these three interact to provide a solution to the

task of ensuring success for the individual child who is to be taught to read. Each of these three elements is discussed below. Following these elements is a checklist of criteria for selecting reading teaching approaches.

The Child

Each child has his own unique of abilities, experiences, previous learning experiences and interests. All these elements need consideration. In deciding which approach to select at any moment   For children who tend to be withdrawn or anxious, you may have more success with formal, teacher-directed approaches than informal ones. You should consider also the state of the child's visual and auditory abilities, his level of oral language, his special needs and interests. Wait a minute, and think about this. Can you give reasons why this is so? Discuss your views with your reading partner.

The Teacher

The teacher's general philosophy of education plays a prominent role in his/ her choice of reading approaches. He/she may prefer a formal teacher-directed or non formal child-centred approach. He/she may feel that reading should be isolated from work in the other language arts. Whatever the philosophy of the teacher, it is essential to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each approach of teaching reading.. If this is done, the gaps or weaknesses of a given approach may not be realised.

The Reading Process

The reading process is another important element to be considered when selecting reading approaches. Here you will consider all those initial abilities that a child should have in order to learn to read. These are oral language facility, auditory and visual abilities. You will need to go back to the last two units to remind yourself of these abilities and their importance in the reading process.

Criteria for the Selection of an Approach for Teaching Beginning Reading

1.   Any approach to be selected for teaching beginning reading, approach must give help to the children in mastering beginning reading skills. These skills include:
   -       The association of spoken and printed language;

- The awareness of a correspondence between the left to right letter order within words and the sequence of sounds within a word.
- The ability to differentiate letter shapes
- The relationship of symbol to sound
- Strategies for decoding unfamiliar words and
- The understanding that printed language gives a message or information

2. The approach should encourage the child to become an independent reader as quickly as possible.

3. It should emphasize the child's understanding of the content of what is read.   That is, it should not be for producing a mechanical reader.

4. It should encourage thoughtful and critical examination of the content to be read.

5. It should make reading natural, realistic and meaningful.

6. The approach should not over emphasize word meaning at the expense of message or information understanding.

Exercises

1. What is reading approach?

2. Name the elements to be considered in   choosing   reading approaches.

3. Discuss the criteria for the selection of reading approaches.

Answers

1. A reading approach is a way of teaching reading to children to enable them to read without difficulty.

2. Elements to be considered are the child, the teacher and the reading process.

3. Criteria for selection
	- Approach should encourage children to master reading skills;

- Encourage children to become independent readers;
- Encourage understanding of content
- Encourage thoughtfulness
- Make reading natural, realistic and useful.

3.1.2 Visuo-phonic and Linguistic Approaches

This approach of teaching reading encourages the child to work out the meaning of words by himself by learning the individual letter sounds and groups of sounds and blend these sounds to form words.

This idea of blending sounds to make up words can be particularly useful when teaching children any regular language where the sounds are constant like Yoruba e.g. "b-a-b-a", "baba". However, in languages where there are irregularities like that of English spelling e.g. a word like 'laugh' could never be worked out with phonics.

Advantages

1.   Children can learn more in the area of phonics in the first level of schooling than in any other approach.

2.   Learning the elements and generalisations of phonics gives children a tool that is useful in many reading situations.

3.   Becoming independent in word recognition earlier eliminates the necessity for the rigidly controlled vocabulary and constant repetition found in many basal reader series.

Disadvantages

a.   This approach incorporates a large amount of drill in the early stages. Many children reject this type of programme.

b.   Lack of attention to meaning as the emphasis on drill is dominant. Comprehension is not well developed because of this emphasis on drill.

c.   The children have little interest in reading because of the drill emphasis.

d.   The approach will usually develop slow laborious readers.

Exercise

1.   Explain what phonic approach is.

2.   Mention 2 of its merits and 2 of its demerits.

Answers

1.   Phonic approach of reading focuses on children learning the sounds of letters and the rules that apply to reading before learning words by sight.

2.   Merits
     (i) Children learn more
     (ii) They become independent in word recognition earlier.

     Demerits
     (i)   A large amount of drilling is involved.
     (ii) Lack of attention to meaning.

3.1.3 Whole-word and Look/say Approaches.

This approach encourages children to learn by associating words with pictures. Learning is by association of words with pictures. Children are taught to respond to whole words rather than separate parts of words. This method is used to start children reading for the following reasons:

1.   When children begin to read, their visual discrimination is often not perfect and it is easier to respond to the shape of a whole word than to shapes and combination of letters.

2.   The meaning of a whole word is something children can understand whereas the individual letters have no meaning. For example, the children know what a table is but what is a 't?'

3.   Using this whole word method, children are able to read sentences quite quickly. This develops their confidence

However, this method seems to function well in the very early stages but as all new words have to be visually memorised, the learning soon becomes too great. The child has to wait to be told any new words by the teachers and as such the approach restricts reading independence.

Exercise

Discuss some activities for look and say approach in teaching reading.

Answer

Word-picture matching: This is a simple activity to check if the child understands the meaning of words. The child can be given a pile of pictures and words. The child then matches words with the correct picture. Here are some examples:
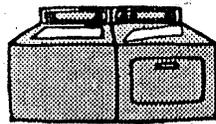
Telephone

Kettle

Dog

Television

Cooker

Radio

Fork

Spoon

3.1.4 Language-Experience Approaches

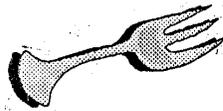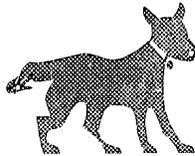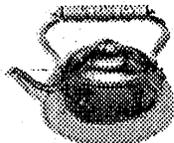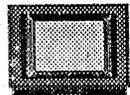There are different activities which generally make up the language experience approach. The first involves the use of the child's own language. For example, if a child draws a picture and the teacher asks him about it, the child might say, "It's my house". The teacher would now write the child's exact words on the board and encourage the child to read it pronouncing the individual words. The other activity involves asking the child who has been on a trip to write about his experiences. Another activity involves using experience charts. Here the children are encouraged to relate interesting experiences they have had. The teacher records the stories on the chalkboard or in a chart and the pupils read the stories of their experience. Later, the stories are transferred from the chalkboard or chart to a booklet which is kept in the reading corner.

The merits of this approach include:

1. The experiences which children have had are made more meaningful when written on the board or chart for children to read.

2. The stories are more interesting to the children because they are about their own experiences.

3. Understanding is made easy because the vocabulary is that of the children.

4. Children have the opportunity to acquire a broader reading vocabulary in that the vocabulary is not controlled.

5. There are no restrictions on the content which may be used as a basis for the study.

Demerits

a. The better children will usually control the content of the story and may suggest vocabulary which is not meaningful to many of the children.

b. The teacher spends much time helping the children develop an experience story.

Exercise

The experience approach is child centred. Do you agree with his statement? If yes, give reasons why you agree. If no, why?

Answer

Yes: - It is based on children's experiences
- The vocabularies are those of the children
- Children participate more in the process of learning
- There is no restriction by the teacher

No: * Teacher spends much time helping the children to narrate their experience

3.1.5 Individualised Reading Approach

This approach is based on three growth and behavior characteristics of children – seeking, self-selection and pacing. The child seeks those experiences from his environment which are appropriate to his maturity and needs and interest. They are reading activities in which he can experience success and pace or progress at his own rate. The approach is characterised by the child's freedom to choose any book to read at any time. The approach fits well with the individual interests of children and emphasises reading for personal satisfaction. However, few children are able to begin learning to read without the teacher's help.

Merits

1. The teacher can capitalise on each child's special interests and unique background of experiences.
2. The child can progress at the rate which is most comfortable for him.
3. Children seem to develop more favorable attitudes toward reading so they usually read more books.
4. The reading materials are varied and will include the best of children's literature rather than being limited to a set of textbooks.

Demerits

1. Children may have difficulty selecting a book appropriate to their level to stimulate progress.

2.   There is no opportunity to develop readiness for reading a new selection.
3.   There is no systematic procedure for gradual introduction or repetition of the vocabulary and concepts that are being learned.
4   There is some doubt about the adequacy and performance of skills learning that are developed in brief, infrequent conferences.
5.   There is a danger that children will not read enough different types of books to broaden their literacy interests.

Exercise

One major feature of individualised reading approach is that it is characterised by the child's _____ to choose any book to read at any time.

Answer: Freedom

3.16   Eclectic or Mixed Method Approaches

From the discussion so far, you have seen by now that no one approach appears to satisfy all the criteria that were set. Teachers of these young children are very much aware of this fact so they use a mixture of approaches for their reading programme.. Note however that mixed methods will only work really efficiently if the mixing is carefully planned and the work integrated.

4.0   CONCLUSION

A reading teacher should be conversant with the various approaches of teaching reading. He must be skilled in selecting the right approaches for teaching the children.

5.0   SUMMARY

We have examined the nature of reading approaches, the criteria for selecting approaches and the various approaches that can be used to teach children to learn reading. We have seen that no one approach appears to satisfy all the criteria that were set. A majority of teachers of young children are aware of this and so they use a mixture of approaches.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT(TMA)

1. Discuss five criteria you will use to select reading approaches for beginners.

 2.   Describe two reading approaches.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4: ORGANIZATION OF READING INSTRUCTION

CONTENT

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
           3.1   Organization of Reading Instructions
                    3.1.1 Class Reading
                    3.1.2 Group Reading
                    3.1.3 Individual Reading
                    3.1.4 Materials for Teaching Reading
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor Marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In order that growth in reading ability can proceed at the best possible rate, it is necessary to give some thought to the organization of reading instruction. Unless there is definite and thoughtful planning, then the children will be allowed to waste time and possibly become bored. The teacher will also not be able to make the best use of the time available considering the heavy pressures of an ever expanding curriculum and the number of children in her class. In this unit, we shall be discussing how reading instructions should be organized for children. We shall also be discussing the reading materials that could be utilised to foster reading in the early years.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Describe how to organize reading instructions for children in the early years;
- discuss the significance of instructional materials; and
- Name and describe the materials for teaching reading.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   Organization of Reading Instruction

Traditionally, reading instructions are organized along class work wherein children read aloud after the pattern of the teacher, or group work wherein the class divides into small groups for reading and individual work. Historically too, it was thought that work in the basic skills should be allocated during the morning session in school and language was given a place of pride for it was deemed that children were more capable of the mental gymnastic involved at this time. Moreover, English work was under such headings as reading comprehension and writing composition. Generally, there is no specific allotted time for reading on the time-table in the Nigerian public schools. Reading is done during comprehension. This has been found to be an error because research results show that time-table and organization of reading are some of the reasons for children's low achievement in reading. A related problem is that reading tends to become separated from many of the activities of which it is an essential part. For example, the assignment given in Mathematics may completely ignore the standard of attainment reached by the child in reading. Thus written work is divorced from reading and the interest and motivation gained from the content and practical subjects may never be transferred to the reading process. In this situation, many children never see the usefulness of reading as an aid to learning, as a means of communication or as an excellent medium for satisfying one's curiosity. Reading instruction is also hampered with lack of expert teachers in the area. In the Nigerian pre-primary and primary school systems, there is the generalists teachers handling these children so the organization of reading instruction is limited to just class reading, group reading and sometimes individual reading as presented below.

3.1.1 Class Reading

Class reading is the approach wherein the whole class is given the same book and one child at a time reads in turn. This approach is predominant in the Nigerian classrooms even though it has fallen into disuse in many other nations. A reason why this approach should be discontinued is that it is not likely that all the children in the class would be at the same level of reading or share a common interest in one single text. In a typical Nigerian classroom situation, teachers make use of the recommended books. Sometimes it is not all the children that have the recommended books.

Technically too, class reading would appear uneconomical in the sense that only one child is reading and it is only the child's difficulties that are being examined while the rest of the class are playing the passive role of following the text, if in fact they are engaged in any mental activity at all. Again, the simple act of reading aloud brings its own complications. Most children read more quickly when reading silently and the child with a speech defect is not limited in fluency when he doesn't have to make a sound response. Perhaps, the most frequent class activity in reading will be listening to the teacher read a story. This will be a daily feature of work throughout the early years in the school.

Exercises

1.   Discuss what class work is in reading instruction

2.   Give reasons why it should be disused.

Answers

1.   Class work in reading is the approach wherein the whole class is given the same book and one child at a time reads in turns.

2.   Reasons why class work in reading should be disused

- It seems an unrealistic approach, only few children are likely to be at the same stage in reading attainment.
- All children might not share a common interest in one single text.
- The other children play passive role while only one reads. They might not be mentally involved in the reading.
- Children read faster when they read silently.
- Children with speech defect are disadvantaged.

3.1.2 Group Reading

Group reading is an approach where the class divides into groups of four or six children and read from the same text in turn. This is quite common in the early years of schooling for the young children. In this approach, the teacher usually moves from group to group or concentrates her time upon those children who are not making satisfactory progress. Sometimes, groups are formed entirely of children who have approximately the same reading attainment or alternatively each group is given a leader whose reading attainment is superior to that of the group.

Can you think of demerits of this approach? Let us examine some of them.

1.   The teacher spends more time and energy in keeping the children in their places and following as well as helping them with their reading.

2.   Disciplinary difficulties always arise when the interests and abilities of the children are not being catered for.

3.   Some will limp through the book with great difficulty whilst others are impatiently waiting to race ahead.

4.   Reading speeds in children of equal attainment vary greatly and the child reading aloud usually falls behind those reading silently for most people can read more quickly than they can speak.

5.   The group situation lacks motivation for the silent readers waiting for the oral reader and soon begins to loose interest.

Though group reading as outlined above would seem to have little value, division into groups for other activities is good.   For example, small group is good for learning structures, for interest and project work, for the introduction of a new stage in phonic work, reading games.

Exercise

How will you overcome the limitations of group work in reading?

Answer

Consider all the limitations stated in the text and proffer solutions to them.

3.1.3 Individual Reading

In the early stages of reading, the most valuable single facet of a reading programme is the moments when the child has the satisfaction of having the teacher's full attention for a few moments whilst he reads to her. The child feels important and cared for in this situation, whilst the teacher is able to supply immediately the type of encouragement or support which is needed. The frequency of this contact will lessen quite naturally as the child grows in fluency. Currently teachers seem to be very impatient with the children and have very little one-on-one contact with them. most teachers often drop this activity rather too early in the child's reading development.

Individual reading is not without weaknesses. The weaknesses include:

1.   It is a very time-consuming task.

2.   young children cannot work on an individual programme for long periods without intervention and help of the teacher.

Hearing children read on one-on-one is very valuable from many merits. They include:

a.   The teacher can impart a feeling of successes which the child may not experience when reading in group.

b.   The child can be helped to bring expression into his reading.

c.   New words met can be discussed and added to the child's vocabulary.

d.   The teacher can observe the progress being made by the child and therefore can follow up the sessions by providing materials which will promote further reading growth.

e.   The teacher will note any difficulties being experienced and thus be able to device activities to remedy them.

f.   The teacher can keep a constant check on the child's understanding of what is read.

Exercise

Make a case for individual work in a reading programme in your school.

Answer

Use all the points under the merits of hearing children read to make the case.

3.1.4 Instructional Materials for Teaching Reading

Adekeye (1982) refers to instructional materials as "materials or objects which help the teachers to make lessons explicit to the children". Olaitan and Agusiobo (1981) opined that "they are any device, place or equipment, graphic representation, sound reproduction or illustration that helps the

pupils to learn". From the forgoing definitions, we can summarise that educational materials are facilities which support or enhance learning activities. They are stimuli for the learners and aids to the teachers.

There are several other names which have been used to refer to educational materials. Some of these are educational resources, teaching aids, instructional materials, media, teachers tool, visual instructional materials, audio and audio-visual aids just to mention a few.

Abifarin (1995) writes that these materials can be classified into two – the print media i.e. text books, reference books, magazines, posters, bulletins, etc. and the electronic media e.g television, radio and internet etc.

Examples of Reading Materials

Teachers of the young children should be familiar with the types of reading materials necessary for a modern reading programme. In addition to foundation reading materials provided by the textbook series, the following types of materials are generally recommended.

1.   Experience charts constructed especially for each group of children.
2.   Sets of supplementary books for group reading that are easier to read than the standard text for the class.
3.   Sets of readers in the content fields such as social studies, science and health.
4.   Poetry selections that the teacher can read to the class.
5.   Picture books for beginners and good stories for leisure-time reading at least one copy per pupil.
6.   Single copies of children's literature – at least two copies per pupil.
7.   Children's pamphlets and magazines.
8.   Dictionaries of suitable difficulty for children.
9.   Children's encyclopedia for the intermediate.
10.   Audio-visual resources such as mounted pictures, film strips, sound films, exhibits and specimen as discussed earlier.

Problems with Procuring Reading Materials

Several factors militate against the procurement of resources we have identified. Some of these problems are:

a.   Lack of sufficient funds
b.   Much time is needed to prepare or procure materials.

c.   Some aids are sophisticated, others are delicate, there is need to guarantee their safety. Many schools have no storage facility.
d.   The teacher-pupil ratio is very high; aids are usually inadequate to go round
e.   There is no electricity supply in most of the schools to operate these aids
e.   There is the problem of personnel to manipulate or operate and maintain some of the aids especially the sophisticated ones.

Exercises

1.   Discuss the importance of instructional materials.

2.   List some materials that would promote reading in the school.

Answers

-       Instructional materials are major tools in the hands of teachers
-       They stimulate the interest of children
-       They make learning more permanent.
-       They provide experiences not easily secured in other ways.

2.   List of reading materials

a.   Books
b.   Charts
c.   Prose and poetry selection
d.   Picture books for beginners
e.   Children's magazines and pamphlets
f.   Dictionaries
g.   Encyclopedias
h.   Audio-visual resources, etc

4.0   CONCLUSION

A meaningful reading programme must put in place a well organized reading instruction. The teacher must decide on the best way to organize her class so that children will learn well how to read.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed how reading could be organized in the classroom. We examined the place of class reading – an

approach wherein the whole class is given the same book and one child at a time reads in turn, that of group reading where the class divides into groups and read from the same text in turn and individual work, the most valuable single facet of a reading programme.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1.   Name how reading could be organized in young children's classroom.

2.   Discuss individual reading organization.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5:   READING ACTIVITIES

CONTENT

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
        3.1   Storytelling
        3.1.1 Use of Books
        3.1.2 Poetry
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor Marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The child develops skills in language and literacy activities by participating in various experiences and activities. Some of these activities and experiences include storytelling, reading poetry and story books. In this unit, you will learn the various ways by which each contributes to growth in the language arts.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:
i.   List activities that promote reading in early years.
ii.   Use storytelling, poetry and prose to teach reading
iii.   Acquire skills for Encouraging children to develop good reading habits.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   Storytelling

Storytelling is a creative ability which children always enjoy. We use storytelling to entertain, to teach and to develop appreciation of literature. Storytelling is an activity that offers opportunities for developing skills in language and literacy. Specifically, the child learns to listen and have experience in speaking while talking about the story. The child learns to keep in mind a sequence of ideas, increase his vocabulary and enlarge his background experiences.

It is important for you as a teacher to know the criteria you can use to select stories for young children. Some of the criteria are discussed below:

1.   choose or select a simple, well-developed story, centred on one plot with sequence of events structured so that a child can anticipate to some degree the outcome of events. Elements which make the children wonder what will happen next can add much to the story.

2.   Involve the children with large amount of direct conversation.

3.   Use of repetition, rhyme and catch phrases that the child memorizes quickly and easily.

4.   Use of carefully chosen, colourful language.

5.   Situations involving familiar happenings. The new, unusual and different may be included, but there must be enough of the familiar with which the child can identify.

6.   Simple and satisfying climax.

7.   One main character with whom the child can easily identify. Too many characters can be confusing.

8.   A variety of ethnic cultural and racial events.   Stories should present realistic pictures not ridiculous stereotypes of ethnic groups.

How will you know that some stories are helpful to the children? The following questions may be helpful in judging the adequacy and appropriateness of stories:

i.   Does the story help the child gain some insight into his/her own personal life or the lives of other people?

ii.   Does the plot or action of the story hold the child's interest?

iii.   Does the content add to the child's joy in living and a feeling that life is good?

iv.   Are the characters honest, well described, unforgettable?

v.   Does the story include humour, dramatic elements and beauty of language appropriate to the child and the story.

vi.   Is the information accurate?

Exercises

1.   What is story telling?
2.   What are the benefits of storytelling?
3.   List criteria for selecting stories for children.

Answers

1. Storytelling is a creative activity.

2. Storytelling is used to entertain, teach and appreciate literature.

3. The criteria for selecting stories for children include:

    7. Well developed plot
    8. Contain direct conversation
    9. Use of repetition, rhyme and catch phrases.
    10. Beautiful and colourful language
    11. Simple and satisfying climate, etc.

3.1.1 Use of Story Books

Children develop a love for books very early if they are encouraged to develop a feeling that books can be friends and companions, an awareness of the fun and enjoyment that can come from books, an appreciation of good literature, the knowledge that books can be sources of information and an interest in caring for books.

In selecting a book, the following criteria are crucial. They include:

-       Types and content of books
-       Illustrations
-       Format and physical makeup

Types and Content of books: young children should be introduced to a variety of types of literature recommended for young children. For very young children (0-3 years) picture books and rhymes books are very suitable. Older children between ages 3 and 5, should be given books for

learning how to count, books on the alphabet and animal story books are suitable. Simple books that are inspirational and humorous and can stimulate creative expression are also recommended.

Illustrations: Young children usually read their books via pictures, therefore attention should be given to the illustrations contained in children books. The artist/illustrator is really part of the story contained in the book. He/she should complement the author's effort in the content, mood, and feeling involved. His/her illustration should be relevant and match the plot and tone of the story. Children also like brightly coloured illustrations.

Format: Book bindings should be sturdy and firmly stitched. The covers should be attractive in order to encourage the child to care for them. A binding that comes off the book at the first handling can be most discouraging for the child. Among the collection of books are those for holidays and special occasions that will not be used as often as some of the others. These books may be purchased in the less expensive editions. For the favourites that are used in day in day out, a good binding is an economy. The pages should be of strong, heavy paper to prevent their tearing easily as the child turns them. The size of type and spacing of words are important. Most of the books should be light enough and of a size that is easy for the child to handle.

Exercises

1. List the criteria for choosing children's book.

2. Discuss the format of a book for the early years.

Answers

1.   - Types and content of books.
     - Illustrations
     - Formal and Physical makeup.

2.   Format
-    The binding should be sturdy and firm.
-    The cover should be attractive
-    Occasional books be less expensive
-    Every day books should be strong, made with heavy paper.
-    Should be light to handle.

3.1.2 Poetry

Experiences with poetry can be happy and spontaneous ones for children. Children enjoy the sounds around them, create sounds themselves, laugh at unusual combinations of words, etc. The spontaneous language of children is often poetic in nature. Poetry, if well selected and correctly used helps the child to listen carefully to learn new words and ways of expressing one's feeling, to develop increased auditory awareness or acuity, to improve the quality of one's own voice and to feel secure in the group as one participate in saying poetry with the group. Poetry can bring laughter and happiness to the child.

If children are to appreciate and enjoy poetry, it is imperative that the teacher appreciates poetry and shares his or her enjoyment in presenting the poems to the children. The steps to be taken could include the following:

1. Teacher reads the poem aloud first in order to make the children become familiar with the words, mood and tempo.

2. The poem may be read or shared from memory.

3. As much as possible, the poem should be related to some thing or incident familiar to the children.

4. Teacher should not force children to memorise poems because many children have been turned away from poetry. Rather, poems should be read to children in a simple, natural and an appreciative manner. Many children will learn poems in this manner without the pressure to memorise.

Exercise

1. Identify the benefits children can derive from learning poems.

2. List three poems suitable for young children in the early years.

Answers

1. Poems help children to listen carefully.
-      It helps them to learn new words.
-      It helps them to learn ways of expressing one's feelings.
-      It helps them to develop increased auditory awareness or acuity.

2.-   Twinkle, Twinkle little star …
-       One, two buckle my shoe …
-       See, see, I can see the moon …
-       Humpty, Dumpty sat on a wall …

4.0   CONCLUSION

It is very evident that listening and speaking serve as a base for reading and writing and if these are rooted in experience, furnish a rich background of meaning for written and printed symbols. Storytelling, the use of books and poetry play a significant role in enhancing reading skills.

5.0   SUMMARY

Story telling is a creative art which children enjoy because it is used for entertainment, teaching and developing appreciation of literature. Its role in enhancing language development cannot be underestimated. Similarly, the use of books stimulates curiosity and a sense of wonder in children. It enhances their interest and leads to meaningful investigations where carefully selected. The role of poetry cannot be over-emphasized. Poetry gives enjoyment and pleasure to children. All these are reading activities that provide opportunities for children to develop their language and communication skills.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1.   Describe three ways by which reading can be enhanced for children aged 4-5 years.

2.   Discuss four criteria you will use in choosing books for the pre-scholars.

3.   Discuss three steps you will adopt in teaching poem to three years old children.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 4

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING SKILL

Unit   1:   Handwriting
Unit   2:   Development of Writing
Unit   3:   Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum

Unit 1: HANDWRITING

CONTENT

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
         3.1   What is Handwriting?
                  3.1.1   Pre-writing Activities
                  3.1.2   Letter Formation
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

There can be little doubt that the standard of handwriting has steadily declined for many years and is now at a very low ebb. This state of affair started in schools when the curriculum became expanded and many more subjects were added. Unlike when the business of the school was just the 3 Rs that is reading, writing and arithmetic. In many classrooms today, the position of handwriting has been abolished to be replaced with verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, computer, etc. Regardless of the importance of modern technology – word processors, computers and electronic typewriters – handwriting can never be replaced. Despite living in an age of computer keyboards and 'book' computers with which handwritten data can be electronically recorded, handwriting is still an essential skill.

There is need to bring back the craft of handwriting to the main stream of educational tradition in Nigeria. It is a skill that has special significance for

the early years. It lays a sound foundation for perceptual and spatial learning skills which beginning learners must acquire as early as possible. It is an education in self-control. A good handwriting gives satisfaction to the writer and pleasure to others who will read it.

In this unit, we shall be examining the concept of handwriting, its place and pre-writing activities that can foster its development.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define what handwriting is
- discuss its importance
- describe the practical activities that children can do to foster the development of handwriting.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   What is Handwriting?

Handwriting is the writing done with a pen or pencil. It is a person's particular style of writing. Handwriting is defined as penmanship. Handwriting in the modern day schooling is not an end in itself but a tool for communication and self-expression. It meets the need that pupils have for recording ideas, writing messages, signing their names, writing letter for example when seeking employment, and labeling objects.   Its usefulness cannot be exhausted. It inculcates orderliness and neatness into the children. It aids good visual memory, especially for spelling. Handwriting can make the difference between academic success and failure. A child with a writing problem may have a problem when it comes to examination because what he writes in the examination is not readable, he may fail. Hand writing is a skill that one must learn well.

The ability to formulate an idea in mind, appropriate syntactic patterns, to plan the correct graphic form for each letter and word, to correctly manipulate the writing instrument to produce the letter shapes, to integrate complex eye-hand relationships, to have sufficient visual motor memory, all these are required in the act of writing.

The skill of writing involves not only recognising and remembering different shapes (symbols) and relating them to spoken language but also the ability to reproduce these symbols and create one's own written

communication. The teaching of handwriting appears to be rather out of fashion as far as most teachers are concerned, and to me this is a matter for regret. Many children are slow to turn to creative writing simply because they lack the necessary tools. Moreover, an untrained hand usually makes large number of unnecessary movements and is uneconomical in the use of the child's time. With the values gained from the reading process, the child should be helped to form his letters in an expert manner as early in his school life as possible. Writing is undoubtedly the best training for left-right orientation in reading. A short course in letter formation helps the child who tends to reverse or invert letters. Written work also aids word recognition in that it draws attention to the letter patterns which form the word and of the contribution of the individual letter to the whole word.

Writing is of real help to the child in helping him to build a sight vocabulary. Many children gained great help in word recognition from writing. Handwriting allows us to be artists and individuals during a time when we often use computers, faxes and e-mail to communicate. Fonts are the same no matter what computer you use or how you use it. Fonts lack a personal touch. Handwriting can add intimacy to a letter and reveal details about the writer's personality.

Exercises

1. What is handwriting?

2.   Identify the usefulness of handwriting in early years.

Answers

1. Handwriting is penmanship.

2.   Usefulness of handwriting
-       It is a tool for communication and self expression
-       It teaches orderliness and neatness
-       It aids good visual memory
-       It promotes academic success.

3.1.1 Pre-writing Activities

Some children do not grasp the basics of handwriting and reading in the early days of their education and fall behind their contemporaries. This is largely because they have not in many cases been taught or else have not fully understood the basic primary skills of:

- seeing the shapes of letters (visual)
- hearing the sounds of letters (auditory)
- recognising - the recognition of letters (perceptual)
- speaking – the vocalising of letters (oral)

The child beginning to write must have a good control of his hands and the ability to watch the way in which his hand is moving (hand/eye co-ordination). This development of control and co-ordination is part of general motor development. The use of pencil or pen demands a very careful control of the hand and for many children this kind of time control has not been demanded from them before they reach school. It is for this reason that when a child comes to school he may well be given a number of activities to help him to improve his control and coordination.

Activities to Improve the Control of the Hand

There are many pre-writing activities that can be employed to improve the control and coordination of the hand to prepare children for writing. These include:

Drawing
Painting
Moulding of Clay
Jigsaws, etc

Drawing: Any kind of drawing, whether the child is using a stick in dry sand or his finger in wet sand, is useful practice. The use of crayons can be enjoyable or the use of chalk on a board. Pencils of course can be used as soon as the child is able to hold one correctly.

Painting: Children enjoy exploring the possibilities of colour. Paint brushes should be made available for the children to use. Improvised paints are readily available such include the juice of flowers such as bougarvilleans can produce a readily available substitute. Painting helps to make a child's hand flexible and trained for writing.

Moulding of Clay: Children love manipulating clay soil because of its texture. This should be made available for the children to manipulate to produce different objects. Moulding clay also helps to make a child's hand flexible.

Building: Local materials provide natural play materials for the children which they can use to build and construct. Sticks and leaves woven together or stones piled up make houses and bridges.

Jigsaws: The fitting together of jigsaws again provides a useful way of using the hands if the pieces are to be properly joined to form the picture. Completion of jigsaw puzzles is an enjoyable activity for many children and requires considerable skills in matching and the making of a whole from a number of parts.

Colouring outline drawings, tracing and drawing with templates and joining together of dots to form pictures are helpful for motor control as well as visual discrimination.

Matching Exercises: These consist of sets of pictures in twos. The child is given a pile of these and has to arrange them in identical pairs.

Completion of drawings of common objects which have some parts missing.

Exercise

Discuss the reasons for providing pre-writing activities for children in the early years.

Answer

-       Pre-writing activities promote the development of visual, auditory skills and the control of the hands.

-       The activities are natural to children, they enjoy doing them.

3.1.2 Letter Formation

Having gone through the pre-writing activities, the children are ready to write. Another important thing to teach the children is to adopt habit of sitting in the correct position. It is difficult for children to write well if they are not sitting well with adequate space between them.

For the sitting position, the child should

-       sit square to his/her desk
-       keep both elbows a little away from the sides

- keep the handwriting book straight on the desk
- hold the crayon/pencil/pen firmly and don't let it fall.
- move whole hand and arm as they write.
- hold writing material lightly.

When the child is ready to write, the first thing he should be encouraged to do is to scribble. Scribbling helps to train the wrist of the hand and makes the fingers flexible. Next the child moves on to write patterns. Pattern writing will check proper control and coordination of the hand. It will also help the child to acquire the correct directional movement for successful writing.

There are three types of handwriting. They are print script lettering, copy writing and cursive writing.

Print Script: When the child begins to write, he starts with a simple print script. The reason for this is to avoid initial confusion between different types of printing at the early state. It is the print script that is found in the early books that a child is likely to meet.

Print Script Lettering

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Usually, children learn the writing of the lower case (small letters) form of the letters first because they will grow to use this more than the upper case (capital) letters. It is also important to note that writing tends to develop more slowly than reading because of the learning of skill control.

Copy Writing: The next step for the child is to move gradually to copy writing after having mastered the correct formation of letters. The child attempts to copy the teacher's pattern of writing. Gradually, the child moves to copying few sentences many times.

Cursive Writing: This is a more advanced form of handwriting style. Once the child is able to copy a few sentences in a good clear print with confidence, he can begin to write a sentence on his own, a more fluent style of joined up writing can also be introduced e.g.

Thisismyhouse

In teaching handwriting, usually most schools use practical, middle ground approaches. It is better when it grows out of the child's normal classroom activities such as writing invitation, making labels and preparing material for the class newsletter. Every opportunity that the child has to write should be harnessed to develop his handwriting.

Research results show that children prefer manuscript writing (simple print lettering) to cursive writing at the early years. The following reasons are likely to favour this preference.

1. It is easier for the child to learn and it provides a feeling of success early in the school experience of the child.
2. The child learns the same alphabet for writing that he learns to read.
3. It helps the child learn to read.
4. Strain and fatigue on the child's muscles are lessened by eliminating the long, joining strokes used in cursive writing.
5. It is easier to read and involves less eyestrain.

Exercises

1. Name the three types of handwriting.

2. Which of these styles will you recommend for the children in early years?

3. Give reasons why you will recommend it.

Answers

1. Simple print script lettering, copy writing and cursive writing.
2. Simple print script lettering.
3. Reasons for recommending simple print script lettering are:
(a) It is easier for the child to learn.
(b) It helps the child to learn to read.
(c)   It gives the child opportunity to learn the alphabet over and over.
(d)   It is easier to read.
(e)   It is easier to write.

4.0   CONCLUSION

The arts of reading and writing go hand in hand. Even though reading precedes writing, the two cannot be divorced from one another. The development of handwriting is necessary if the child is to write fluently and

develop writing as a tool for expressing his thoughts and ideas as well as for recording information.

5.0　SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that handwriting is penmanship and a tool for expressing one's thoughts and ideas as well as for recording information. We identified pre-writing activities such as drawing, tracing, matching, building, colouring, completion of jigsaw puzzles, etc. These activities we learned are helpful in developing visual perception. We also examined how children form letters and gradually begin writing from simple print script lettering to copy writing to cursive writing. We agreed that writing tends to develop more slowly than reading because of the additional skills of control.

6.0　TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

(a) Discuss five benefits of handwriting to the pre-scholars.
(b) Describe five ways how you will use to prepare the pre-scholars for handwriting.

7.0　REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2:   DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING

CONTENT

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
        3.1   The Importance of Oral Language in Developing Writing
                skill
                3.1.1 The importance of Reading Skill in Developing
                        writing
        3.2   Activities for Developing Writing Skill
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The early years are the root years for language development. Recall that
this point has been made in the previous units of this course. Language is a
very efficient way to store and recover information and to solve problems.
Therefore, oral and written language are important from the stand point of
the growth and development of the child. In this unit, you will learn more
about the purpose of oral and written language, programs of oral and
written expressions and suggestions for improving oral and written
instruction.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

▪ discuss the relationship between oral and written language;
▪ describe reading activities for developing writing
▪ give suggestions on how to improve oral and written skills

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   The Importance of Oral Language in developing writing Skills

Recall all you have learnt about language development in the preceeding units. For instance, you learnt about the stages of language development, and the process of language acquisition and the importance of all these in the early years of a child. In the last unit, you learnt of how children acquire and develop reading skills. You learnt of how the development of reading skills was dependent on a child's oral language facility and other abilities such as being able to match objects etc. You also learnt that being able to read positively affect oral langugage development.

In this unit, you are going to learn about the development of writing in the early years, the role of oral and reading skills in developing writing skills and the interrelationships of all the language skills. Writing is an important skill a child needs to develop in the early years. Children love to write beginning with scribbling. Written work has a special appeal to children because of its permanency in comparison to speech. They also get a greater feeling of creative achievement when they can repeatedly turn to piece of work they themselves have written

Development of writing in the early years is dependent on a child's oral language facility and rich background experience. Research tells us that the key to language growth is enriched experience, that growth in language is also a part of the child's general pattern of maturation. The implication of this is that we cannot ask a child to speak or write about things he does not know or understand. Children in early years are normally keenly interested in language. They are found to be eager to use words as soon as they pick them up.

The importance of oral language facility has been noted in previous units.. Research results show that the average individual talks at least two times for every time he reads or writes. Moreover, when the child is helped to build acceptable speech patterns, the child is being helped to increase his power to read and write. It is important therefore that teachers of children in the early years provide opportunities for children's oral language development by providing rich programme of learning activities to encourage language expression.   Here are some activities to promote oral language development:

- the children's daily scheduled time for "show and tell". Children are encouraged to bring in an interesting object from home to show to the class and to tell the class about it.
- Announcements by the teacher
- Directions by the teacher
- class discussions by the children
- informal conversation of events
- purposeful discussion of events
- messages and reports
- dramatic plays
- story telling, jokes and riddles
- giving and following directions
- club and society meeting. Those that are relevant to early years such as Cub Scout, Brownies, Girls' Guide, etc/
- using the telephone, etc.

Pause and think about how the above activities could be incorporated into the child's daily schedule in the school. This brings us to the issue of preparing the time-table for the children. The school time schedule has to be very flexible and amenable to alteration and modification as occasions and needs dictate.

Oral language activities could start as soon as the children arrive in the school. They should be free to take out and examine and play with materials and toys available for them. They can engage in free play and informal interactions with their peers and the teacher. This is an opportunity for oral language expression covering wide areas.

Assembly and accompanying activities such as singing choruses, praying, reciting the national anthem and pledge are activities that give children opportunities to use oral language. Other school activities like organized work activities like number and letter work, group play where children in small groups use different toys, sand play, water play, making of things like cutting and pasting pictures, making shapes of animals, colouring and the like, small group game, routine preparation for snacks, clearing up after snacks, story time, etc are what will encourage and enhance the use of oral language expression. These activities keep children active and get them talking and increase their vocabulary growth.

3.1.1 The Importance of Reading Skill in Developing Writing

Just like is the case for oral language skill, a child being able to read will facilitate his writing development. As a teacher of early childhood

education, you must organise a rich reading programme that will help your pupils develop and improve their writing skill.

Exercise

1. Can you identify other activities which the teacher can provide to encourage oral language expression?

2. Mention specific school routines which promote oral language expression.

3. Mention three reading activities that will help children in the early years to develop writing skill. Refer to the unit on Reading Development.

Answer

1. Show and tell, announcements, directions, informal conversation, purposeful discussions, etc.

2. School assembly, class activities like organized activities such as number and letter work, group play, sand play, water play, etc.

3.2   Activities for Developing Writing Skill

As we have seen earlier in this unit, writing has a special appeal as children feel its increased permanency in comparison to speech and they also get a great feeling of creative achievement when they can repeatedly turn to a piece of work they themselves have written. Writing also draws attention to the structure of the language, the value of letters in words, the construction of phrases and sentences. As the child writes he has more time for contemplation and more time for expressing a particular thought than does speech.

The following activities would enhance the skills in the children if the activities are properly prepared to start from simple to complex forms.

(i)   **Copy writing**: Here the child copies words, short sentences written on the board by teacher.

(ii)   **Short answer activities**: The child fills in the missing word from a sentence. Although this is still copy writing because no new information is required, it is a first step towards the construction of a sentence. As this activity develops, the child will fill in more and

more words until he feels confident that he is writing alone e.g. This is a big _____ (house).

(iii)   **Replacing Pictures**:   This activity is similar to the first one discussed above. Here the child replaces pictures with words. E.g. This is a _____ . e.g. picture of a fish, book etc

(iv)   **Building a Sentence**: Children can be given the beginnings and endings of sentences and be asked to fit the parts correctly. Examples

An elephant has   very strong
A lion is   black and white stripes
A zebra has   long trunks

(v)   **Finishing sentences**: With adequate exercises given to the child in the above activities, he would gain confidence in his writing ability and could complete simple sentences started by the teacher. Examples:
I woke up this morning to say my _____.
I brushed my teeth and _____ my bath.
I ate my breakfast and _____ to school.
On my way to school, I saw _____, etc.

Other advanced written work can take the form of:

(a) *Writing Reports*: When a child is able to write one or two sentences on his own he could graduate to report writing. He could be encouraged to write a brief report on any event he has seen or any visit he has made.

(b) *Keeping Records and Diaries*: The children can start these activities collectively by keeping class diary with contributions from various children as events happen. Then individual diaries can be kept by the children. Teacher encourages the children to write down events as they happen in their environment in and outside the classroom.

Record keeping also is relevant to keeping diaries. Records of activities, events, etc can be kept by the children in written form.

(c) *Letter Writing*: Children are interested in writing especially letters to their uncles, aunts, friends, etc. Children could be taught how to write simple informal letters. All the features of letter writing should be emphasized by the teacher.

(d) *Writing Experienced Stories:* At first, a child might simply write out a story the teacher has told and gradually be able to write stories he has heard elsewhere or has even made up for himself or has read.

(e) *Notes*: The ability to take notes can be a most useful skill for children to acquire as early as possible. This can be done by the teacher guiding the children as soon as they can write independently. For example, this can be done skillfully through questioning. A teacher can ask the children questions.

Teacher: What did we see during our visit to the zoo?

Child: We saw animals.

This sentence can be expanded to: *During our visit to the zoo, we saw many animals. They include lion, monkey, zebra, etc.*

Gradually, the children would develop the skills to make their own notes from discussions and lessons. Drawing or sketching diagrams are also very helpful. For example, drawing a scene of market place, farmland, shopping mall, children can make notes from observing the sketches giving detailed information.

Exercise

Identify at least four ways you can encourage written expressions in language.

Answer

Writing reports
Keeping records
Letter writing
Writing stories, etc.

4.0   CONCLUSION

In developing writing in the early years, the children need to be actively involved in exercises that involve writing. They could commence from oral language and reading as the springboard and gradually move to independent writing through various activities as directed by the teacher. From what you have learnt from this unit and other units it is clear that all the language skills are interrelated.

5.0   SUMMARY

We have learnt in this unit that oral language expression has an impact on writing development. Informal conversation, purposeful discussion, story telling, dramatic play, etc keep children active and get them talking therein, they increase in vocabulary growth. These activities aid written expression. We also learnt about various acities for promoting writing skill. These include letter writing, writing reports, diary and record keeping, story writing, note taking, etc.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1a.   Describe the importance of oral language ability in the development of writing.
 b.   Describe four activities you will use to foster oral language ability.

2.   Discuss in details four activities you will provide for young children to develop their writing skills.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3:   LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

CONTENT

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2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Body
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Our ability to communicate through language is one of the things that clearly separates us from other beasts. Language provides us with a means for storing our knowledge and wisdom and it allows us to transform that knowledge. Language makes possible the sharing of human experiences. In early years, as soon as children learn to communicate through language, they express their interests, needs and feelings in every aspect of their lives. This shows that language is not just learned for its own sake but it is an integral part of the child's entire world. Therefore, language is given a prime of place among the school subjects and it is the chief medium of instruction in schools. In this unit therefore, you will learn how language and literacy are used in the teaching and learning of various subjects such as mathematics, creative arts and the sciences.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the role of language as chief medium of instruction in schools;

- Explain how language is featured in learning school subjects such as Mathematics, Science and Creative Arts; and

- Discuss how activities could be incorporated in the learning and teaching of the subjects to enhance language and literacy in the early years.

3.0   MAIN BODY

3.1   Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum

Language as you have learned in this course is very crucial to human beings. It is the chief medium of instruction both at home as well as in the school.   Unfortunately, language learning is often compartmentalized and decontextualized in school settings. Rather than embrace natural language learning opportunities that may arise as part of any school activity, too often reading and writing are reduced to narrow exercises devoid of any meaning. Teachers can foster language and literacy throughout the day and in natural situations especially across the school curriculum to stimulate language development.

3.1.1 Language and Literacy Activities for Mathematics

Evidences abound that learning Mathematics in school could be fun if appropriate language activities are incorporated. Geist (2001) argues that Mathematical literacy begins at birth, all that children need to construct concepts for themselves are a stimulating, language rich environment and receptive adults.

The following are ideas and activities – suggested ways in which language and literacy can become an integral part of the Math curriculum.

1. *Everyday School Activities* – creating story problems from everyday school activities. These can be conversations carried on about naturally occurring events like:

    Snack time:- Distributing snacks, counting the number of children's table, how many napkins are needed for a snack table, counting the children in line, counting how many children are present and the number absent, etc.

    Circle time:- This could involve voting who the leader should be, the number for and against making time relationships e.g. "did we get into our circle slower or faster than yesterday?"

> **Play ground:-** Counting the number of times a child rides the bicycle around the field, measuring "how high do you think you can build your sand structure?"

2. *Writing* – When children learn new Math concepts and processes, they can write about them in their diaries, journals, or in letters to take home. Activities about shapes in sorting attribute blocks, playing with different coloured blocks, balls and other items, building with blocks, completing puzzles and using manipulatives are things children could write about.

3. *Project Approach* – Children can use Math to solve problems, can use counting to solve disputes and to explain and demonstrate ideas.

4. *Reading in Math Class Using Picture Books* – Teachers and curriculum designers recognise the power of children's literature. In the past few years, children literature has become an increasingly important component of Mathematics curriculum in early childhood programs. Good picture books provide meaningful context for learning Mathematics concepts. Stories spark children's curiosity about their world, they serve as spring boards for Mathematics investigations. For example, the story of an elephant and a mouse in "In just a little Bit" could be used to teach "balance". The elephant and the mouse were meant to use a piece of the playground equipment called the see saw. The elephant and the mouse have mismatched heights and this fact prevents them from using the seesaw. This story helps to break down the artificial dichotomy that sometimes exists between learning Mathematics and living Mathematics. When connections are embedded in a story, the reader not only enjoys the book but also is intrigued by the Math concepts. Think about local stories that you learned as a child or those you have heard before. Recall those stories. Can you bring out any Mathematical concepts from such stories?

Exercises

1. List at least two everyday school activities in Math class which can help to increase children's vocabulary.

2. Mention at least three Math activities which children can write about.

3. Identify a story which you can use to teach a concept in Math.

Answers

1. Everyday school activities　　　　–　　snack time
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Play ground
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Circle time, etc

1.2　　Math Activities　　　　　　–　　Shapes
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Sorting attribute blocks
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Puzzles
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Manipulatives, etc

1.3　　- Who sank the boat?
　　　　- The tortoise and the dog in the farm
　　　　- The greedy dog, etc

3.1.2　Language and Literacy Activities for Science

Children can increase in vocabulary by doing Science and reading and writing about it. The following ways are practical activities that will enrich the children's language development. These include:

(i)　　**Labeling**: Science experiments usually involve the use of various equipment. Children can benefit from labeling the equipment. This activity can be varied by making a matching label and putting the equipment away. Labels can be taped on appropriate equipment. New words can be recorded in the children's notebook and diaries.

(ii)　　Children can go on a nature walk in the school environment or the neighbourhood looking at insects or plants. Children can name the objects they come across during the walk. They can write their ideas on a chart.

(iii)　　**Writing 'laboratory reports'**: As children mature, they should be able to write 'laboratory reports' of their experiment in Science. These can be free-form or can have a more formal format, using guided questions with spaces for answers. For example, children can be guided to write a 'laboratory report' by responding to these questions:

1. List the steps you took in the experiment.
Step　I:　……………………………………………………………….
……………………………………………………………………… …….
………………………………………………………………….Step
II:　…………………………………………………… ……..

………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………..

Step   III: ………………………………………………………   ..

…………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………

2. What is one important thing you learned?
Answer: _____

_____

_____

3. Draw a picture of the most interesting part of the experiment

Exercises

Name or list ways by which you can enhance language development in a Science class.

Answers

Labelling
Nature walk and
Writing 'laboratory reports'

3.1.3 Language and Literacy Activities for Creative Arts

Creative arts include music, drawing, painting, drama, dance, etc. Language and literacy can be incorporated into these arts to make them meaningful and enjoyable to children. Through play children can engage in these activities and grow in vocabulary development.

1. Music: Marching to music, playing a xylophone (relation of size to tone), clapping, playing music on cassette player, drumming, etc. All these can be accompanied with singing. As the children sing what they listen to they improve their pronunciation and vocabulary. Music experiences can be used to play with various sounds.

2. Drawing: Children love to draw and talk about what they draw. They talk to themselves at a younger age but later the talk subsides and turns to thoughts. Children can be encouraged to discuss their drawings and share their thoughts with others. As they do this they improve their language.

3. Dramatisation: If language expression is to be creative, it must be based on thoughts and ideas that are the child's own. The child should

be given opportunities for experiences to develop many ideas and thoughts. Some children can express their feelings in pantomime, while others may use puppets. Dramatisation can offer many opportunities through which creativity in oral language may be encouraged. Dramatisation may include dramatic plays, creative dramatics and using puppets.

Dramatic Play is spontaneous and free of teacher direction. This type of play is one in which the child may try living as an adult, find out how it feels to have certain responsibilities such as feeding the baby or cooking dinner, the role of the doctor, fire fighter, etc. In doing these, children practice certain basic language skills such as speaking, using conversation, listening, learning new words. This helps them to understand their world and the people in it.

Puppets are often used by children in dramatic play. The child who hesitates to speak with others or before the group may speak freely through a puppet. With young children, the puppets are generally used informally without scenes and stories.

Creative dramatics – This is a group activity wherein an experience is acted out by the children as they are guided in thinking, feeling and creating their own dialogue and actions. There are no lines to be memorised, no formal audience, no costumes or technical aids. This contributes to language arts skills as children speak, communicate and listen. Auditory discrimination may also be built. Folk tales provide stories which are short and in which the actions and feelings of the characters are easily identified.

Moreover, whenever children learn a new letter, part of speech, punctuation mark or word, they could act it out in some ways. For example, letters could be made with the whole body or parts of it.

Exercises

1. What are Creative Arts?

2. How can you foster language development through Creative Arts?

Answers

1. Creative Arts are made up of dance, drama, music, drawing, painting, etc.

2. How to foster language development through creative arts include:

-       The use of music and dance
-       Dramatisation
-       Drawing and painting
-       Writing stories about these activities.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Language is not just learned for its own sake but it is learned because it is an integral part of the child's entire world. Therefore, ideas and activities are to be incorporated into the subjects in the school curriculum to help foster language development.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you learned that as soon as children learn to communicate through language, they express their interests, needs and feelings in every aspect of their lives. This shows that language is an integral part of their entire world. It is therefore imperative for the school setting to ensure that language learning is not compartmentalized or discontextualised and reduced to narrow exercises devoid of any meaning. Teachers should foster language and literacy through the daily activities and in natural situations of the school setting across the school curriculum. Subjects like Mathematics, Science and Creative Arts could be re-packaged to involve language laden activities to ensure language development in the early years.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT(TMA)

1. Discuss five ways you will use to foster language development in a Math class in the early years.

2.   Describe five activities you will suggest to be incorporated into the creative arts curriculum for the pre-scholars that will enhance language development.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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