CHAPTER-V
SUMMARY

5.1 Introduction

Language is at the very core of human experience; it is a public system of agreed signs and symbols which humans have created in order to communicate with one another and make sense of their worlds. Learning in schools is mediated mainly through language. So it is very necessary that all the teachers develop a clear understanding of the process of language and the ways in which children learn and use it.

5.2 Bases of the present problem

Studies on language acquisitions have proliferated over the past two decades. But earlier studies are confined to the studies of formal properties and structure of language. Recent researches have moved away from these to its uses and functions. Studies have centred thus on the dynamic aspects of its uses and functions than the more static features of code and syntax.

Long before the children start going to school, they begin to use language to bring about changes in their environment, to interpret their world, to communicate with others and so on. Ac-

cording to Halliday (1973) the children know what the language is because they know what it does and also how language is instrumental in helping them realize their intentions. But the language which the child knows will be different from what the teacher uses in the class room. The language of the teacher will be mainly relied on a didactic transmission model. Children who just start going to school use language in a personal way to express their own individuality, their own feelings and emotions. Any attempt to impose a uniform standard of dialect upon children at the expense of their personal expressive style runs the risk of undermining self esteem and self will.

In class rooms the children should be given opportunity to use language heuristically and imaginatively. Although it will be impractical for the teachers to try to chart the functions for each child, the language teacher should have an awareness of a whole range of uses of language and give children opportunities to develop language in all areas. Children who are linguistically restricted are likely to be those whose personal and heuristic functions in particular are less and while this may be explained in terms of social experience, the teacher's task is primarily a linguistic one. Thus, in planning a language programme, the teachers need take into account not only children's own linguistic background but also the linguistic demands that will be made upon them by the school and eventually by the society.

5.3 Theoritical Background

Before planning out the ways in which various functions of language can be developed in school, it is important to know how young children acquire language. The theoretical approaches to language acquisition are varied. Within the behaviourist frame work language learning is explained in terms of imitation and re-inforcement. But it fails to explain the active nature of language learning. The very fact that all children have acquired the basic rules of grammar of their native language and have mastered its syntactic complexity before they come to school suggests that such rapid learning is partly supported by some innate mechanism which is exclusively a human characteristic. Mc Neil (1966) postulated the language acquisition device LAD - which not only enables us to learn the syntax of one's own language rapidly, but also helps us to recognize pseudo- sentences as grammatically correct, independent of their meaning. Chomsky (1959) has recognised the fact that by the age of four most of the children have acquired the basic rules of morphology, such as formation of plurals and past tenses. Based on Chomsky's proposition, series of studies have been conducted focussing on grammar and syntax in the speech of young children. Brown (1963), Cazden (1968) and Brown and Bellugi (1964) designed studies to demonstrate this. Studies in this area pointed forward a deeper understanding of young children's language, in-

dicating what they do when they learn the dynamic nature of language, regardless the complexity of the particular native language (Slobin 1973). One important aspect they overlooked was social context. Hymes (1970) pointed out the importance of communicative competence, that is the ability to use and understand speech within a particular context. Such competence is nurtured by the social experiences, needs and motives of the speaker. Brunner (1974) claims that language acquisition occurs in the context of an action dialogue in which joint action is being undertaken by infant and adult. Gordon Wells (1971) has explained conversations between mother and child in pre school years. He found that the children engaged in conversation with the caring adult had mastered the meanings and syntactic structures by the time they reach school. Wells (1982) calls this type of active engagement in conversation as an apprenticeship in meaning and comments that the most effective talking and learning take place when the adult and child engage together in an apprenticeship in meaning. The studies in this area show a substantial similarity in the early conversational experience of children across social classes.

But the works of Bernstein (1973) suggest that there is apparant differences in the language of different social classes. Difference in the kind of speech system or language code that children develop are part of the process of socialization. According to Bernstein, families from different social backgrounds

have different attitudes towards child rearing and thus different kinds of relationships are formed between parent and child which inturn affect the use of language. Bernstein and Henderson (1961), Jean Jones (1966) and Robenson and Rack Stvaro (1967) have also come out with similar findings.

Bernstein's work has been strongly criticised by many people. One of the most virulent critics of the notion of linguistic depivation is Labov (1969) who suggested that verbal deprivation is a myth. He believes that the conclusions of Bernstein have arisen because speech data gathered from different social groups have been collected in very artificial situations.

For most practical purposes we are concerned with thought as it is conveyed to others either symbolically through language or through overt behavious. Language is so obviously and inextricably linked with thought that inorder to begin to appreciate their interdependance and complexity, teachers should have some understanding of the theortical background within which observations of children's thinking have been made. Two different theoritical explanations of the inter-relationship between thought and language have been put forth by Vygotsky and Piaget. According to Vygotsky "though development is determined by language the child's intellecual growth is contigent on his mastering the social means of thought, that is language" (1962). The notion of language acting as a regulatory mechanism receives sup-

port from Luria's work (1956). Piaget's (1959) emphasis is rather different. He admits that language is necessay for thought to develop, he does not regard it as a sufficient condition. Piaget suggest that language alone is not enough to explain thought.

It is now widely accepted that the language curriculum should be organised in such a way to promote and extend pupil's use of language in a wide range of situations. The surge of interest in language work in schools together with the important findings in the area of language acquisition in children seem to form a promising and supportive background for practising teachers. But what is happening in the real classroom situation may be different. Studies of Flandors (1970) and Edwards and Furlong (1978) have come out with the finding that the teachers did most of the talking in class and there is little evidence of successful learning through talk. Surveys have shown that much of the language work was on formal writing and mechanics of language work was on formal writing and mechanics of language (D E S 1978, 1979, 1982). Even in nursery classes teachers were observed asking children closed questions as if to test them and effectively stemming the flow of genuine conversation (Wells 1982). Tizard and Hughes (1984) suggest that teachrs have much to learn from mothers and their young children at home, where conversation is highly educational and children are constantly extending their knowledge of the world and being stretched intel-

lectually by talking, arguing and asking endless questions. Wells (1983) likewise suggests that teachers of young children have to devote more time to encouraging them to talk in the more sponstaneous ways with which they are familiar at home and suggests domestic type situations as useful starting points for this. Rosen (1973) has expressed the feeling that children have available much more linguistic competance than usually finds its way into their speech. We need to create those situations which exert the greatest pressure on them to use their latent resources to provide these experiences which urge them towards the widest range of language use.

Although much work has been done in the area of language acquisition and language teaching abroad, in India studies in this area are confined mainly to achievement tests. Although few studies have been reported in the area of language acquisition, that too acquisition of certain grammatical categories, attempts are not made to relate the knowledge of language status to language teaching. Present study is an attempt in this direction.

5.4 Present Study

Present study is an attempt wherein the aim is to assess the language status of the primary school entrants and study the significance of some psychological and sociological factors that influence the language development of primary school entrants.

Based on the conclusions of the investigation suggestions are madefor modifying the mother tongue text book of Std I. Study is confined to children with Malayalam as mother tongue.

Objectives of the study are:

1)   to assess the language status of the primary entrants,

2)   to study the relationship between language status and logical reasoning ability, and

3.   to study the effect of some sociological factors on language development.

5.5 **Design**

Ervin- Tripp (1970) has stated hat a child by five must have mastered all the synatactic and semantic features of his native language. But according to Annette Karmli off Smith (1979) fifth year is a critical period since it involves the interaction of linguistic and cognitive problems. Hence it should be seen as to how the child's language differ from adult's language and what are the factors affecting language acquisition. The children's language behaviours are studied in different contexts, and regularities in their language performance are seen. The language behaviours are seen in three levels - morphological, syntactical and lexical.

Knowledge of children about their native language is studied in natural situations and in structured situations. Since varied contexts give more reliable data, utterances are collected from four different situations namely elicit response, playful situation, structurered test and interaction with family members. Utterances have been tape-recorded and notes made wherever necessary.

Regularities of utterances are categorized within a frame work of reference, and children's behaviours are explained on its basis. A rule system regarding the language behaviour of primary entrants is devised through qualitative analysis of data. The relationship between logical reasoning and sociocultural factors are seen by Chi-square method.

5.6 Sample

Sample for the final study consists of thirty normal children who are neither mentally retarded nor have any speech defect. These children are selected from among the new entrants of Std. I in two schools of Cochin in Kerala.

5.7 Detailed Study

The Study is conducted in three phases: Pilot study- phase I, Pilot study- phase II and Final study.

5.7.1 Development of Tools and Techniques

Since no comprehensive study related to overall language development at a particular stage was available in indian context, investigator devised tools and techniques for the present study.

5.7.2 Details of the Study

Thirty children are observed in three situations (1) unstructured interview with the investigator and elicit utterances, (2) conversations at playful situations and (3) responses during the structured situation. Apart from these, ten children are observed at home for more details.

Study was conducted in three phases : (1) pilot study-phase I, (2) pilot study-phase II and (3) final study.

Pilot Study- Phase I : In order to have an understanding of the language behavious of primary entrants, ten kindergarten children were observed in their class room. Spontaneous utterances are

collected and analysed. With this data a taxonomy is developed for the language status of five year old children whose mother tongue is Malayalam.

In natural settings, utterances won't yield all the language competance of children. So structured situations are also provided to elicit the language competance. The factors that contribute to children's behaviour are different at different situations. The ICP task devised by Fraser, Bellugi and Brown (1962) concluded that imitation precedes production on the course of language development. Lovell and Daxon (1967) have also concluded that children are able to imitate and then comprehend linguistic structures before they use them. Baird (1972) and Fernald (1972) challenged these conclusions and pointed out that comprehension and production are same. In order to minimise the situation effects in studying the child's competance it is important to test him both in receptive and productive tasks (Brown and Berko (1960). Lingustic knowledge is seen by elicited imitation also.

Techniques for inferring receptive and productive control of grammatical rules from picture identification test has been described by Fraser, Bellugi and Brown (1963). Lee has developed a 20 item test based on Fraser, Bellugi and Brown test. Bellugi and Klima (1969) have developed a set of mampulation tasks to see the grammatical comprehension.

A test for assessing syntax in Kannada (TASK) is developed by Vijayalakshmi (1981). It consists of a series of sentences. Each series of sentences arises to test a particular grammatical category or a type of transformed sentences. Some sub-tests have both comprehension and production tasks. In this, scores are derived from expression responses. Toys and pictures are used as complementary material. Sreedevi (1976) has developed a test in Kannada to assess case relations, tense markings, gender markings, transitive and intransitive verbs, wh-type questions, Yes/No questions, negation and co-ordination. A syntax screening in Tamil has been developed by Roopa (1980). A test has been developed in Telegu by Usha Devi (1985), which aims at assessing four grammatical categories namely negatives, reflexives, relative sentences and multiple prepositional sentences.

Investigator developed a test to see the competance through techniques like comprehension, production and imitation. Grammatical categories for the test are selected based on the pilot study A and complemented with relevant theoritical knowledge of Malayalam Grammar.

The investigator got acquainted with the techniques of comprehension and production by testing ten children mother tongue is Malayalam, in Sabari School, Baroda.

Investigator developed a test with two parts Vacabulary and grammatical categories. Vocabulary test included 140 words. The domains selected for testing were food, toys and grames, animals, parts of body, clothing, home routine and outdoor life and traffic. Words were selected on the basis of investigator's experience and the text book for Std. I. Each word was complemented with pictures. In testing words both comprehension and production techniques were used. Test for grammatical categories included both morphological and syntactical categories. the categories selected are plural markings, tense markings, case markings, post positions, indefinite determiner definite determiner, adjectives, negation, Yes - No questions, conjunction and disjunction. The test included comprehension and production tasks. Few sentences of varied grammatical complexities are tested with imitation techniques. Suitable scoring system is developed.

Pilot Study- Phase II: Thirty children are selected from two schools in Cochin. Utterances are recorded from spontaneous speech and notes are made wherever necessary. The test was administered to these children. Their conversation in playful situations are also tape-recorded. Utterances are transcribed and qualitatively analysed. The informations gained from pilot study are used as a base for final study. The procedural details are thoroughly discussed with experts from All India Institute for Speech and hearning, Central Institute of Indian Languages,

Department of Lingustics, University of Kerala, Department of lingustics, M.S. University of Baroda and State Institute of Education, Trivandrum. Necessary changes are made according to the suggestions received.

An unstructured questionnaire is prepared to elicit responses. Each child is made to talk for thirty minutes. In the structured test, items are presented according to degree of difficulty. The final test included grammatical caegories like plural markings, tense markings case markings, post positions, empty morphs adjectives, adverbs, definite determined, affirmation negation, interrogation, wh-question and embedded sentences. Items are complemented with pictures and toys, wherever necessary. Testing techniques are also modified. The final test has two parts - vocabulary and grammatical categories. Vocabulary test consists of 125 items. For 85 items production technique is used. For 40 items comprehension technique is used. Items are complemented with pictures and toys wherever necessary. The domains of vacabulary include animals and birds, household things, body parts, food, traffic, out door life, action, musical instruments and professions. The grammatical categories include 134 items. For 32 items comprehension technique is used. For 84 items production technique issued. Elicit imitation technique is used for 10 items and story comprehension technique is used for 8 items. Pictures and toys are used wherever necessary.

5.8 Final Study

Children are selected after the admissions are over. Screening test for mental retardation and speech defects are administered. The sample includes children with primary education and without primary education. The language status of thirty children are seen in natural settings and structural situation. Tests for logical reasoning are administered. It includes three Piagetian tasks. Details regarding family background of these thirty children are collected. Ten children are further interviewed at home, their interactions with parents and siblings recorded.

Uttrances are qualitatively analysed. Three levels of language status are framed according to the complexity of grammatical categories. Children who have acquired only morphological categories are gouped low. If the children have acquired morphological categories, then weightage of the structured test is seen. children who have got 65% abd above are grouped high and rest as middle group. accordingly the performance of Piagetian tasks three levels of logical reasoning are formed. The data gathered are subjected to statistical analysis. Chi-square is applied for the following five pairs of observation (1) Language

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status and logical reasoning, (2) language status and socio economic status, (3) language status and parental working status (4) language status and position in family and (5) language status and pre primary education.

5.9 Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis shows that of the thirty children studied, all have acquired basic syntactic structures of language they speak. The variations exist mainly in the case of aspects and moods. This leads us to the onclusion that in the primary classes, the mother tongue teaching should give more importance for the acquisition of communicative competance with regard to semantic aspects. A sound communictive competance only will enable the child to use the language as a medium of expression in higher classes. The study reveals that at this stage there is no relationship between language status and logical reasoning. Socio-economic status has an influence on language status. Parental working status has no influence on language acquisition. Pre primary education has an influence on language status and position of child has an influence on language status.

The study reveals that the children's knowledge about logical items are very good except for three children all others have scored more than 75% in production and comprehension. This leads

to the conclusion that when the child enters the school he brings to his school years, a rather large variety of concepts at least as represented by a large vocabulary.

Words alone do not bring meaning. Language becomes meaningful only when words and morphoms are combined in a specific or out or forms. The study reveals that the children have acquired a large number of morphological categories and are able to use them. Overgeneralyation was very less in many cases which leads to the conclusion that the form is comprehended well and can be expressed appropriately. But when it comes to the syntactical categories, the patterns of sentence they utter in various situations, reflect that the children have already acquired the notion of word order and embedding, but has not started expressing it appropriately. Very few children have used different types of sentences. Some are aware of the modal and aspectual notions but are unable to express it.

5.10 Implications for Teaching

The lacuna in the expressing abilities of children should be taken care of while introducing a language programme at the primary level. The number of units a child can utter and the complexity of the sentence uttered are both important at the early stage.

In the early phase, languge is a means to satisfy immediate physiological needs and wants. But when he matures this relation may become increasingly direct and then he starts an intense use of language to explore relations with people and things. So the affective role of language should be developed into a congnitive one. From the analysis it is inferred that the child by the time he arrives at school has learned to speak whatever sound system, grammar and vocabulary that is characterstic of his mother tongue which he has heard most frequently at home. Basing on the acquired capalities teacher should alter upon system of habits which are not highly practised but which also probably may serve a supportive role in the child's adjustments to the non- school environment. Experiences indicate that spoken language should run ahead of written language. At least in the primary level the child should generally learn the language patterns of standard language before they are introduced to the printed froms.

In Kerala, State Institute of Education introduced new syllabus for first standard in 1985-86 as a part of their attempt to improve the text books of all classes. book has three parts (1) Alekhana parichayam (2) Sambhashana parichayam and (3) Kerala Padavali. First part introduces the child into writing through strokes which will be a base forthird part Kerala padavali in which syllables and words are given for practice in orthography. In the second part the child is expected to get training in improving upon his communicative competance. This is given impor-

tance because experience indicates that spoken language should run ahead or writing i.e. the child should generally learn language patterns in the spoken language before they are introduced in the printed form. Presented study has revealed that the child brings to his school a large variety of concepts at least as represented by a large vocabulary; but many gaps still exist in his verbal response system. It must be filled in a natural way as possible. This can be done by a process of giving learning conditions which will allow the child to see relevant distinctions in meaning and differentiate classification of concepts. Although the attempt of SIE is appreciable it has not fulfilled the objectivs to the full extent. The concepts included are very familiar for the children and do not provide challenges. Actually in mother tongue education the child should be given an opportunity to live in it. In Kerala, where there no marked difference between rural and urban set ups, most of the children will be exposed to variety of things in day to day life. So care should be taken not to include too simple concepts which will not give the children any enjoyment. Language teaching at primary level is not merely a process of teaching new habits and skills but often a process of changing habits. Care has been taken in the second part to take into account the regional variations of vocabulary and relate them with standard form. This need special mention. Margaret - J. Early (1967) has suggested that in the first stage of appreciating language and literacy forms the enjoyment will be unconscious. In this stage pleasure should come

without struggle unusual combinations of words, a sense of rhyme and rhythm and humour brings in pleasure. Meanings do not matter much at this state. So when including small poems for children these aspectsshould be taken care of. But the poems included in the book do not reflect these aspects.

At the stage of early child hood, the children are constantly extending their knowledge of the world. The schools task is to build in this early intellectual achievement by providing more time to extend children's general knowledge and verbal explanation of their environment. Domestic type questions are useful starting points. But is should never end up in mere replatation of loxical items only pressure should be exerted on the children to use the extent resources and provide experiences which urge them towards the widest range of language.

5.11 Suggestions for further research

Present study attempts to study the language status of the primary entrants where mother tongue is Malayalam and suggests its implications on teaching. The conclusions of the present study is that the primary entrants have a good deal of knowledge about the language they speak. The text book is the major source of teaching and it has to be recognised with self and the home environment as a starting point. The suggestions cannot be taken

as conclusive from this single attempt since the study is confined to a small sample. Explorations in this area will be of great advantage to reorganise the mother tongue curiculum. The influence of language on the development of cognitive structure need further invesigation. Arun Kumr (1985) has concluded that students think, comprehend and communicate letter in the language they speak related researches can be taken up in this area.