

## CHAPTER - III

### SECTION - I

#### Methodological Issues in Describing Child Language

##### 3.1 Introduction

During the two decades numerous developments have taken place in the study of language acquisitions and language learning. Many studies have been conducted in various languages within the developmental psycho-linguistic framework to understand the language behavior of children and also the process underlying children's acquisition of grammatical categories. The goal of studying the child language is to describe what the children know about their language. This can be achieved by observing the children's behaviour in different contexts and see the regularities in their language behaviour. Only from the regularities that appear one can draw inferences regarding the language of children. Describing the child language involves three steps - obtaining evidences, categorizing evidences, and

formalizing the categorized evidences to provide a scheme of child's knowledge of the language.

### 3.1.1 Obtaining evidences

The first step in describing child's language is obtaining evidences. This can be done either by observing the child in natural conditions with minimum control and interference or by experimentally manipulating one or more components of language. In naturalistic observation children's behavior can be described at the level of a single instance or few instances. A single instance may be important as a dominant mode of behaving. But it is not sufficient for inferences of pattern or regularity. In describing children's language, interactions of separate behaviors in terms of their relative consistency represent regularity. So in order to describe the behavior, sufficient evidences should be provided so that evidences are not made and conclusions not drawn on the basis of only one or few instances. Language behavior consists of utterances in relation to contexts. The context in which the child speaks is as important as what is actually said for understanding children's behavior.

Naturalistic observation can be longitudinal or cross

sectional. Experimental observations are generally cross sectional. They can be studies of children's comprehension of language or can be attempts of elicit speech the children produce. Comprehension can be assessed either by manipulating objects to correspond with relation between words in a sentence stimulus or by showing pictures.. The data consists of behavioral responses to a presented non-linguistic context and a related linguistic output.

While obtaining evidence, there can be loss of information in any case and if data is reduced their informative power may be restricted or limited. Events can be recorded and even in that case something can be left out. Recording by hand may result in great loss of information and constraint on observation. "Loss of information in successive steps with data reduction through recording, transcribing and categorizing is far less at all and only evidence that is obtained is observer's interpretation of children's behavior". (Bloom and Lahey, 1978) Beer (1973) has also cautioned against direct categorization and classification which exclude other possible divisions. Electronic audio or video recording will preserve the event though something is left out.

While understanding the children's knowledge of a language,

the important evidence is the regularity in their language behavior. Regularities can be seen only through repeated observation. Observation of children in their normal school activities is an unobstructive form of measurement. But not all behaviors appear spontaneously even if they have been learned. Suporter (1961) feels that language learning cannot be tested unless an experimental approach is adopted Cazden (1963) states "structured situations for specific purpose of assessing aspects of behavior which are not likely to display themselves can yield basic kinds of information. Others have also stressed the importance of structured observations for yielding specific information about the children's knowledge of a language. "A child's grammar as revealed in his spontaneous speech does not appreciably differ from adult grammar. In order to identify areas in which child and adult grammar are different, we must actively probe the child's linguistic performance. We can do this by selecting complex grammatical structures - structures we consider difficult and therefore likely to be acquired relatively late (Chomsky.C.1981).

When the study attempts a general description of children's grammar within an age group, the data should reveal all the major aspects of children's implicit grammatical rules. This can be achieved only through repeated observations in various contexts, since one context may not reveal all aspects. "The more varied the context in which the child is observed, the better the chance

of obtaining information that is representative of the child's knowledge of language. When possible, therefore, the child should be observed in a classroom setting, playing with a friend and in direct interaction with the assessed as well as interaction with a member of the family. At home the child might be observed interacting with family and friends. If there is time for only one direct observation care should be taken to arrange a setting that will allow for the largest and most representative sample possible. Since the goal of this observation is to find out what the child does (i.e. what language the child uses) adult intrusions and interactions should be relaxed and as natural as possible and should not be designed to test the child or to elicit specific words or linguistic structures (Bloom and Lahey, 1981).

Observing the children's language behavior in structured situations can be studied through language comprehension, or language production, or by elicited imitation. These three techniques have been used by several researchers. The relationship between comprehension and production has been studied and many researchers have come out with the finding that comprehension precedes production. The awareness about the three processes involved in language development is very crucial with regard to language acquisition studies. Leopold (1939) Spitz (1957) and Lewis (1963) while studying the gap between comprehension and production felt that awareness of linguistic

forms precedes production of the same. Wener (1948) and Bloom (1973) have come out with the finding that the child need not understand the word used in a situation before using it himself. Experimental attempts have also been made to see the relationship between imitation, comprehension and production in the course of language development. The ICP tasks devised by Fraser, Bellugi and Brown (1962) concluded that imitation precedes production in the course of language development. Lovell and Dixon (1967) also concluded that children are able to imitate and then comprehend the linguistic structures before they use them. Baird (1972) and Fernad (1972) challenged these conclusions and pointed out that comprehension and production of language take place at the same time. Kenney and Wolfe (1972) tested comprehension, production and imitation of English sentences by forty six children of the age group three to four. They concluded that production does indeed precede comprehension in reference to inflection of verb number Lahey (1974) in his study supports the idea that children may incorporate surface features of a language into their speech before they fully understand the meaning distinctively that such forms present. The interpretation of the results of these different techniques will throw more light into the acquisition of grammatical knowledge of children.

### 3.1.2 Categorizing Evidences

The second step in describing children's language is categorizing evidences. The data can be categorized according to the patterns of regularities, similarities and consistencies. The taxonomy of categorization can be based on language form, content or use. It can be grouping of children's utterances according to the number of words or grouping according to the constituents of word order. Taxonomy of language context can be grouping utterances according to whether they refer to moving objects or static objects, grouping of utterances in relation to a time line according to whether they refer to events that are in a process at the time of utterance or have just occurred or are about to occur, or grouping of utterances with particular form and meaning and sub-categorize if needed. Taxonomy of language use can be grouping of utterances according to whether they function as comments, reports, directions or questions or grouping utterances according to how they occur in discourse, i.e., in response to what someone else says or spontaneously without a prior utterances from some use.

Taxonomy can be unquantified or quantified. In unquantified taxonomy children's utterances can be categorized and listed according to one form or other. In quantified taxonomy each category is presented as a proportion of all behaviors observed.

The objective of analysis is to arrive at an account of regularities in the organization of language behavior. But how to start the categorization is a crucial question. There are three methodologies available for categorizing the observed language behavior.

1. an 'etic' plan which imposes a prior scheme of analysis on evidences and stops there. In this, categories are made up in advance and children's utterances are classified according to this scheme.
2. an 'etic to emic' plan where categorization starts with a frame of reference or preconception of the observed and eventually reaches an emic account of the facts of behavior that appears to be more relevant.
3. an 'etic to emic to etic' plan is one in which the emic plan is used for a set of etic hypotheses to investigate the behaviors of larger group of children.

Thus categorization will account the regularities in children's language and the system of rules they use.

### 3.1.3 Formalizing Evidences

From the taxonomy one can attempt to formalize the rule system that underlie the language behavior. In describing the language some rule system should be devised. Rule system can be devised either by observing the speakers or by referring to available materials by field methods.

A taxonomy presents the regularities in the language behavior whereas formalization is an account of the mental plans whereby rules are used in the language behavior. A linguistic description includes a dictionary or lexicon, with the individual words and morphemes in the language that stands for elements of content and a grammar which is the scheme of rules that specify the ways in which categories of words and morphemes relate to one another (Bloom and Lahey 1981).

There have been different approaches in formalizing a rule from patterns of regularities. The three influential theories are transformational generative theory (Chomsky 1957), semantic theory (Fithmore 1968) and variation theory (Labov 1960). But a linguistic theory that can account for both regularity and variation should account for the facts of an individual child's language and child language more generally. So a balanced theory incorporating the salient features of these three influential theories will be of much use in the class room teaching.

## SECTION-II

### Procedural Details

#### 3.2 Introduction

From the objectives stated in the first chapter, it is clear that the present investigation aims at studying the linguistic status of the primary school entrants. In order to achieve the objective, the design of the study should thus be organized that it enables one to assess the nature of the language acquired by the primary entrants and find out the discrepancies between child's grammar and adult's grammar. Such an assessment demands active probe into the linguistic performance of the children. Various aspects like comprehension, expression and imitation, understanding of language will only reveal the nature of linguistic status.

##### 3.2.1 Design

Ervin-Tripp (1970) has stated that a child by five must have mastered all the syntactic and semantic features of his native language. But studies (Arnette Karmilof Smith 1979) have shown that five year is a critical period since it involves the

interaction of linguistic and cognitive problems. Hence it should be seen as to how does the child's language differ from adult's language and what are the factors affecting acquisition of language at this stage. To achieve this, children's language should be studied in different contexts and the regularities in their language performance should be seen. Only from the regularities can one make inferences about their knowledge of mother-tongue.

While studying the language status of children, their language behavior is studied in five levels - phonological, morphological, syntactical, lexical and discourse.

Phonological      Sound analysis (in relation to orthography as well as morpho phonemics.

Morphological    Inflections and derivation form classes.

Syntactical      Word order, relationship between sentences and sentence types.

Lexical            Vocabulary analysis - quantum of vocabulary and domains of vocabulary.

Discourse        Length of sentence, order in which sentences occur

and number of sentences uttered at a time

A child at the age of five must have mastered all the sounds and must not have mastered orthography. Hence, detailed study at the phonological level has not been included in the present investigation. It is concerned mainly with three levels - morphological, syntactical and lexical. Discourse is not included since from experience investigator has come to know that the children mostly use elliptical sentences and answer through gestures. Blount (1967) has reported the difficulty in obtaining evidences from children.

Collection of Evidences Knowledge of children about their native language can be studied by observing the children in naturalistic situation or by experimental manipulation. Since the data will be more reliable if the contexts are varied, present study attempts to see the children's language behavior in four different situations namely, elicit response, playful situation, structured test and interaction with family members. The utterances have been tape recorded and notes made wherever necessary.

Categorizing Evidences Regularities of the utterances are

categorized with a frame of reference and the children's language behavior is explained on its basis. Qualitatively by forming such a taxonomy, a hypothesis is set for the language behavior of primary entrants.

Formalizing evidences From the tentative inferences, a rule system regarding the language behavior of primary entrants is devised through qualitative analysis of data. In formalizing a rule system investigator is not following any particular theoretical approach. Investigator is trying to see the pattern of utterance and see whether there is influence of some social factors and also whether there is any relationship between language development and cognition. Since relationship between language status and other factors like logical reasoning and socio-economic factors can not be clearly understood the hypothesis are put in null form. It is as follows:

- (1) There is no relation between language status and logical reasoning.
- (2) There is no relation between language status and economic status.
- (3) There is no relation between language status and parental working status.
- (4) There is no relation between language status and position of child in the family.
- (5) There is no relation between language status and pre-primary education.

The null hypothesis is useful when we wish to compare

observed results with those to be expected by chance (Garret 1969) Chisquare test represents a useful method of comparing experimentally obtained results with those to be expected theoretically on some hypothesis.

### 3.2.2 Sample

The sample consists of thirty normal children. By normal it is meant that they are neither mentally retarded nor they have any speech defect. Selection is done with the help of a speech pathologist and an expert from the Institute for Mentally Retarded Children.

The children have been selected from two schools. 21 children are selected from Sree Rama Varma Lower Primary School and 9 children from Sri Rudra Vilasm School. All the children had Malayalam as mother-tongue. Sample includes children with pre-primary education (26) and without pre-primary education (4) and the children vary in the socio-economic status.

Since generalizations are made from sample study, general rule is to use the largest sample possible. But time restriction limit the number of subjects that can be studied. Moreover, in many educational research projects, small samples are made appropriate than large samples since it will provide a sound base for further explorations. This is often true of studies in which

role playing, depth interviews, projective measures and other such time consuming measurement techniques are employed. However, a study that probes deeply into the characteristics of small sample often provides more knowledge than a study that attacks the same problems of collecting shallow information on a large sample (Borg and Gall 1983).

Since the language competence of the children has not been studied with a psycholinguistic approach, present study aims at probing deeply the language behavior of the first standard entrants.

### 3.3 Development of Tools and Techniques

This section provides the details of the procedural steps carried out in developing the tools and techniques to assess the linguistic status of the primary entrants and also procedures adopted in carrying out the study. The issues regarding description of child language have been described in the previous chapter. The procedure for the present study has been developed taking into consideration the issues related in describing child language and the theoretical framework presented in chapter II.

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

The study is designed to be conducted in such a way that the regularities of the children's language behavior can be seen to the maximum possible. It was felt necessary for the investigator since the study aims at a general description of the grammatical structure internalized by the children of five years old and this can be achieved only through repeated observations. The children are observed at three situations i.e. (1) Unstructured interview with the investigator and elicit utterances (2) Conversations at playful situation, and (3) Responses during Structured test administration. Over and above this, language behavior of ten of these children are observed during their interactions with family members at home environment.

The study is conducted in three steps (1) Pilot study Phase-I, (2) Pilot Study Phase-II, & (3) Final Study.

### 3.4 Pilot Study

Since the tools and techniques were developed and refined by the investigator, pilot study <sup>Phase I</sup> A and pilot study <sup>Phase II</sup> B have been conducted. Pilot study A is conducted to develop proper tools and techniques and pilot study B is conducted to modify it.

#### 3.4.1 Pilot Study Phase-I

Part-I One of the goals of the present study is to see the linguistic status of the primary entrants. This can be established only by having a clear perspective about the language knowledge of the children of that age group. To have some tentative ideas regarding the language knowledge of first standard children the investigator observed ten senior Kindergarden children in March who were about to join the first standard in June, 1984 (in Nair Stree Samajam School, Petta, Poonithura, Cochin). Spontaneous speech sample was collected, transcribed and analyzed. The analysis provided a general idea regarding the language knowledge of first standard children. For categorizing and developing the taxonomy of utterances investigator developed a methodology based on devices used by Crystal Fletcher and Garman (1976), Lee (1974) and Strang (1972) and studies on Malayalam Grammar (Raja Raja Varma, A.R. 1974).

Part-II The linguistic status of the children can be determined only by observing the language behavior of the children in different contexts and also by assessing different aspects of performance. The children are observed in natural situation and in structured situations. In structured situations specific aspects can be assessed. But all the aspects cannot be tested in structured situations since speech is something natural and spontaneous. Therefore, in order to develop a structured test to assess the language knowledge of children, the structured test should be developed with care and observation.

The factors that contribute to children's behaviors are different at different situations. The ICP tasks devised by Fraser, Bellugi and Brown (1962) concluded that imitation precedes production in the course of language development. Lovell and Dixon (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. Lahey (1974) in his study supports the idea that children may incorporate surface features of a language into their speech before they fully understand the meaning distinctively that such forms present. In order to minimize the situation effects in studying child's competence it is important to test him both in productive and receptive tasks (Brown and Berko 1960).

Linguistic knowledge is tested by elicited imitation also. In such studies children are made to repeat sentences that contain linguistic structures to be studied. The underlying rationale for presenting such sentences to children to imitate has been that children will process sentences that exceed auditory, memory span according to what they know about the structure of the sentences.

Language Tests        A technique for inferring receptive and productive control of grammatical rules from picture identification task has been described by Fraser, Bellugi and Brown (1963). In comprehension task the examiner shows two pictures and names them, but without revealing which name belongs to which picture. The examiner then speaks one of the sentences and asks the child to point to the picture named. Examiner then speaks the other sentence and asks the child to point once more. Child is not asked to speak at all. His appropriate response that can give evidence of comprehension is selective pointing. In production procedure pictures are once again used pictures to match a pair of sentences grammatically equivalent to those used in the other tasks. Child is told the names of two pictures but not which name goes with which picture. The child is then shown a picture and asks what it is. In production task the grammatical category for which it is tested is only scored.

In imitation procedure no pictures are used. The examiner speaks two sentence that are grammatically equivalent to the two used in comprehension. Child is then asked to imitate these one at a time, following repetition by examiner. Since the aim is to know whether the child will imitate the features of the sentences that are crucial for correct pointing in the comprehension procedure and production procedure, in the imitation task the child' retention of the contrasting feature is scored. His rendering of other parts of the utterance does not affect the score.

Lee (1969) has developed a 20 item test based on the test developed by Fraser, Bellugi and Brown. In this she has included decoy pictures to minimize errors. Bellugi and Klima (1969) have developed a set of manipulation tasks to see grammatical comprehension. Suggestions for administrations are as follows. The object for each problem should be set up on the table in such a way that they do not give clues to the solution of the problem (in terms of ordering or other such clues) and in such a way that the child has to make some changes or movement to demonstrate comprehension. If the problem has more than one part, it need not necessarily be given any fixed order (Appendix for tests).

In India Karanth (1976) constructed the Kannada version of Boston test of Aphasia examination. Development of morphological rules in children of 6-8 years of age was investigated by Subramanyaiah (1978) Development was assessed with the help of Kannada version of Wug test (Berko 1958).

A test for assessing Syntax in Kannada TASK was developed by Vijayalekshmi (1981) TASK is a test of verbal comprehension and expression. It consists of a series of sentences. Each series of sentences - a sub test - aims to test a particular grammatical category or a type of transform sentences. Sub test 2-9 is to test specific grammatical category. Some sub tests have both comprehension and production tasks while some have only production task. Sub tests 16-18 are tests of transformations. Each sub test includes only one transformation. Sub tests include comprehension and production tasks. Sub test 19 is a narration task in which many types of sentences are used. In this comprehension scores are derived from expression responses. Toys and pictures are used as complementary material to test sentences wherever toys are needed they are manipulated in accordance with test sentence. Pictures depicting test sentences are used wherever necessary suitable response sheet and scoring system have been developed.

Sreedevi (1976) has developed a test in Kannada to assess the development of the case relations . tense markings, gender markings, transitive and intransitive verb, wh-type questions, Yes/No questions, negation and co-ordination. Prema (1979) has developed a test to see the acquisition of Consative verbs, negation and co-ordinations in Kannada.

A syntax screening test in Tamil has been developed by Roopa (1980). It consists of ten sub tests. Each sub test has an expression and comprehension category.

A test has been developed by Usha Devi (1985) in Telegu. Test aims at assessing four grammatical categories namely negatives reflexives, relative sentences and multiple prepositional sentence.

In Malayalam test to assess the grammatical categories was not available. Rathi (1983) has studied the development of Malayalam Plural markings in bilingual children. So the investigator developed a test to assess the acquisition of grammatical categories in structured situation.

The test was meant to see the comprehension, production and imitation competence of first standard entrants. Grammatical categories for structured situations were selected based on the pilot study Phase-I, Part-I complemented with other relevant

studies, theoretical knowledge of Malayalam grammar and suggestions from language experts.

The investigator got acquainted with the different techniques for tapping children's knowledge of their native language. Two grammatical categories were tested in structured situations with comprehension and production techniques. The sample was ten children in Sabari School in Baroda. These children speak Malayalam at home. Their responses for five sentences were recorded using elicit imitation techniques.

The test the investigator developed has two parts - Vocabulary and grammatical categories.

Vocabulary test included 140 words (Appendix 1). Since it was difficult to test all the words the children know, a semantic grouping was done. The words are selected in such a way to see how words are distributed over the various fields of child's life. Boyd (1914) and Leopold (1939) have given such classification. The main categories selected are food, toys and games, animals, parts of body, clothing, home routine and outdoor life and traffic. Words were selected based on the experience of the investigator and text book for first standard. The categories include animals and birds, household things, body parts, food, traffic, outdoor life, actions musical instruments and professions. Each word was supplemented with picture or

pictures. In testing vocabulary both comprehension and production techniques were used. Decoy pictures were used wherever necessary. Test included 95 production task and 45 comprehension task.

Test for grammatical categories included morphological categories and syntactical categories. The categories selected for structured situations are plural markings, tense markings, case markings, post position, indefinite determiner, definite determiner, adjectives, negatives, yes-no questions, conjunctors and disjunctors. All tasks had comprehension and production tasks. 10 sentences of grammatical complexities were tested with imitation technique (Appendix 2). A suitable scoring scheme was also developed.

#### 3.4.2 Pilot Study Phase-II

Part-I 30 children were selected from two school in Cochin Radha Lakshmi Vilasam Upper Primary School, and Government Lower Primary School, Cochin) (Appendix 3). Utterances were collected from these thirty children in unstructured interviews. All the utterances were tape recorded Notes were made wherever necessary to reduce loss of information. The children were then made to play. Toys and playing materials were provided for them and were allowed to interact freely. Their conversations were taped. Investigator was a silent observer.

Part-II Broad transcription of the utterances in three situations were made. Data was analyzed for structural complexity like sentence length conjunction and disjunctions subordinate clauses etc. Different morphological and syntactical structures were categorized. The categorization was purely qualitative frequency of occurrence was not taken into consideration for unstructured contexts.

The informations gained from the pilot study was used as a base for the final study.

The procedural details were thoroughly discussed with the experts from Central Institute of Indian Language, Mysore, All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, Mysore. Department of Linguistics, Kerala University, Dept. of Linguistics, M.S. University, Baroda, State Institute of Education, Trivandrum and also with language teachers. According to the suggestions obtained necessary changes are made in the procedure.

### **3.5 Final Version of the Test**

An unstructured questionnaire is prepared by the investigator to elicit responses from children (Appendix 4). Each child is made to talk for about thirty minutes.

In structured test material necessary changes are made. Items are arranged according to degree of difficulty. Some more relevant categories have been included. Final test included plural, marking, tense marking, case marking, post position, empty morphs, adjectives, adverbs, definite determiner, indefinite determiner, affirmation, negation, interrogation, wh-questions and embedded sentences. Items are complemented with pictures and manipulation tasks wherever necessary. The testing techniques are also modified. In the pilot study for all items comprehension and production techniques were used. But for some items the both techniques looked artificial and children showed no interest in performing the task. So comprehension and production techniques are used wherever it was found appropriate and natural. The length of the test is also reduced taking into consideration the time limit.

The final structured test has two parts (1) Vocabulary and (2) grammatical categories. The 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. Decoy pictures are used wherever necessary. The domains of vocabulary include animals and birds, household things, body parts, food, traffic, outdoor life, actions, musical instruments and profession. Scoring is done on a four point scale. 3 point are given if the answer is correct, 2 points if

the answer is very similar, 1 point if the answer is by prompting of giving clues and or '0' if answer is wrong. A scoring sheet is prepared accordingly (Appendix 5) (Refer Sample Item 1, 2 & 3).

The test for grammatical categories comprises items for morphological categories and syntactical categories. There are 134 items. For 32 items comprehension technique is used, for 84 items production technique is used, for 10 items elicit imitation technique is used and 8 items story comprehension technique is used. Pictures and objects are used wherever necessary (Appendix 6) (Refer Sample Item 4, 5, 6 & 7).

The thus prepared test was administered to two children and two adults. Before final administration questions were reframed so that there is no ambiguity at the time of administration. The scoring system and response sheet were prepared (Appendix 7 & 8).

In playful situations, toys and other materials, which provide more opportunity for them to talk, have been included.

### General Principles Of Scoring

Maximum score of an item is fixed keeping in view the range of expected correct and approximately responses. All the items have the same maximum score.

Responses given on the test are classified as :

- (i) Completely correct response
- (ii) Approximating response.
- (iii) Completely correct or approximating response elicited on prompting or repetition.
- (iv) Wrong or no answer.

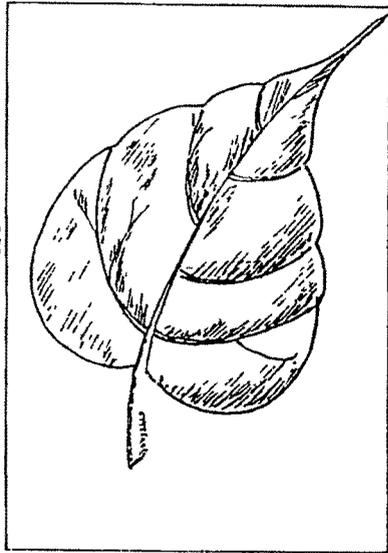
The general principles correct response gets maximum for an item are :

- (i) A completely correct response gets maximum score of that item - 3.
- (ii) Any relevant approximating response other than the correct one gets one score less than the maximum score - 2.
- (iii) A correct response or approximating response with prompting gets some positive score less than the other two - 1.
- (iv) No score for wrong answer - 0.

**Production Task** (Lexical Item)

The performance on the expressive items demand that the subject expresses the lexical forms verbally when the subject is shown pictures or toys.

Tell me what is shown in this picture.

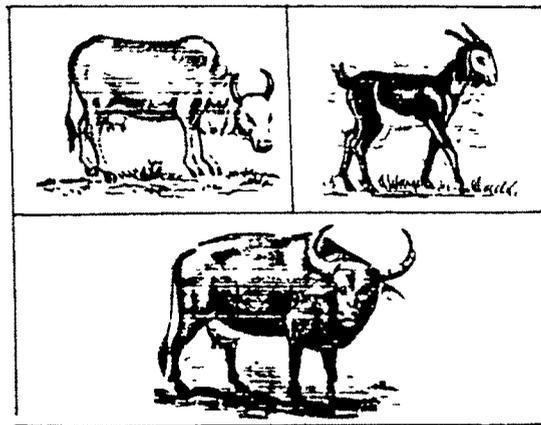


- (3) Leaf
- (2) Appandages of plant
- (1) Answer on prompting.
- (0) Wrong answer.

Comprehension Task (Lexical Item)

The performance on the comprehension items indicate the understanding of a lexical item. The understanding of the lexical item is expressed by pointing to one of the three pictures that illustrates the lexical item.

In the given picture which one is goat :



Correct response - 1.

Wrong response .- 0.

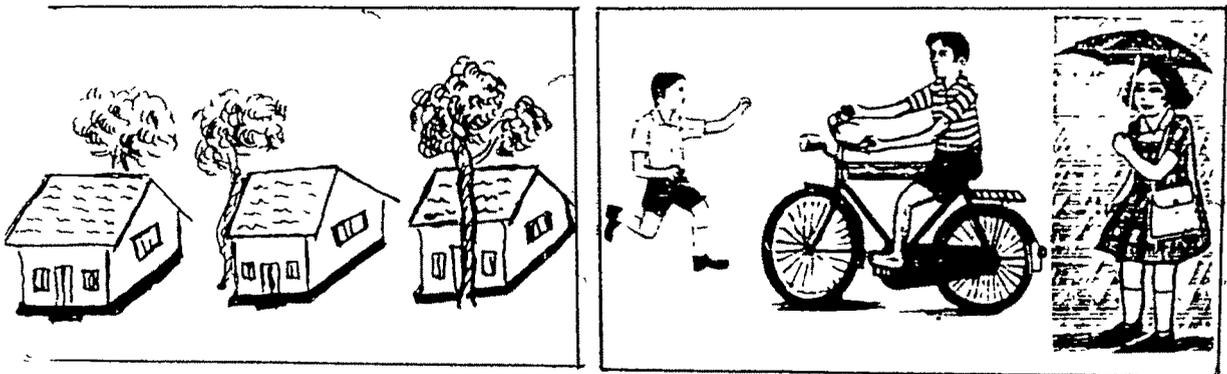
Comprehension Task (Gramatical category)

The performance on the comprehension items indicate the understanding of a syntactic or morphological form. The understanding of the item is expressed through one or more of the following models :-

- (i) pointing to one of the two pictures that illustrates a sentence containing that form.
- (ii) pointing to the object assembly or the function performed by the toy that illustrates a sentence containing that form.
- (iii) Answering questions derived from narration.

A correct response gets 1 mark.

A wrong response gets no score.

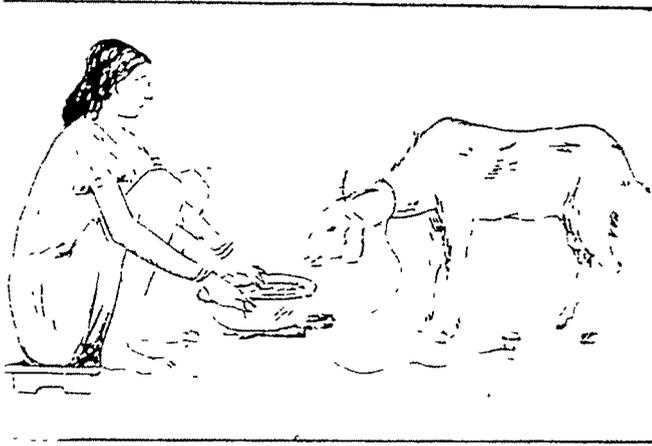


In which picture the ~~tree~~ <sup>tree</sup> is on the ~~front~~ <sup>front</sup> of the ~~house~~ <sup>house</sup>

In which picture the girl is going in the rain with an Umbrella and a bag.

Production task (Gramatical category)

The performance on the expressing items demand that the subject expresses the morphological or synthetical categories verbally when the subject is shown pictures, toys or toys performing various functions involving the particulars morphological structure or syntactical structures.



What is the girl doing.



What is monkey doing in the picture.

### 3.6 Procedures Adopted in Carrying out the Study

Presently, when the admissions were over, 60 students who had been admitted to the first standard of two schools - Sree Rama Varma Lower Primary School, Ernakulam and Sri Rudra Vilasm UPS, Ernakulam are selected Appendix 9. When school was re-opened investigator started visiting the schools continuously so that the children got familiarized with her. Screening tests for mental retardation and speech defect have been administered to these children (Appendix 10 & 11). Children with pre-primary and without pre-primary education are included. Selection is done in such a way that the sample consists of children of varied socio-economic status (Appendix 12). Thus language behavior of 30 normal children are studied in natural situations and structured situation to see the language status of primary entrants.

The study started one week after the schools re-opened after the holidays so that there is no effect of teaching. The study is conducted in five levels.

#### 3.6.1 Elicit Response

The children were interviewed in a disturbance free room. The investigator asked some questions regarding their home and School and prompted them to speak. The elicit speech was

recorded. Notes were made wherever necessary. The children were made to talk at least for 30 minutes so that a minimum corpus of 60-80 sentences are obtained. This enabled the investigator to obtain a background knowledge about the language status of the children.

### **3.6.2 Playful Situation**

The children were made to play in a free atmosphere. They were allowed to mingle and talk freely while they play. Children were made into four groups for the convenience of obtaining evidences. The conversations were tape recorded Notes were made wherever necessary. Utterances in the playful situation helped the investigator to fill in the lacunae regarding many morphological categories and syntactical categories. Many expressions which the children do not use in other situations but only spontaneously are widely used in this situation. This enabled the investigator to come out with the conclusion of acquisition of certain grammatical categories.

### **3.6.3 Structured Test**

The test developed by the investigator was administered to the children. Responses were scored in the scoring sheet and also tape recorded. First the vocabulary test was administered and then the test for grammatical categories.

#### 3.6.4 Tests for Logical Reasoning

Four Piagetian tasks for logical reasoning are administered to the children (Appendix 13). Responses are tape recorded and noted down also.

#### 3.6.5 Interaction with Family Members

Ten children are interviewed in their home environment. Interactions with their parents and siblings are tape recorded. Investigator is only silent observer in this situation. Notes are made wherever necessary. This helps in probing further into the understanding of language acquisition.

Details regarding the family background of all the thirty children were collected (Appendix 9).

#### 3.6.6 Language Status

From elicited responses, structured test and utterances in playful situation it is first seen whether the child has acquired morphological categories. Then they are grouped into three. The children who have acquired only morphological categories are grouped low. If they have acquired morphological categories then weightage of the structured test is seen. Children who have acquired 65% and above are grouped as high and rest as medium.