

Early Language Development: Implications for Curriculum & Pedagogy

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A vignette of a “high achieving” second grade student, “Anjappa” in a relatively “good” teacher’s classroom in Yadgir:

Anjappa was working on a Vachaka Card. The card had pictures of animals and a passage about the zoo.

1. Anjappa read the words akshara by akshara, then blended them together, and read the sentences (4 minutes).
2. He copy wrote the entire card onto his notebook. (36 minutes with interruptions and breaks)
3. Teacher put two tick marks on his notebook without reading it. She asked him to read the card aloud. Pointed out that he was omitting animal names while reading.(7 minutes)
4. Anjappa returned to his seat and copy wrote the card again. (16 minutes)
5. Teacher looks at his card and places 2 tick marks on it, despite one error.

How do you analyze this vignette in terms of:

1. Anjappa's learning?
2. The nature of the pedagogy – its strengths/limitations?

Aims of Early Language and Literacy Curricula*

**Taken from: Position Paper on Early Language and Literacy in India (2016). Delhi: Ambedkar University.*

1. To create relevance for entering literate worlds.
2. To create a sense of engagement with literate worlds.
3. To create contexts supportive of the development of multilingual capabilities.
4. To guide children in comprehending language in oral and written forms.
5. To enable children to develop a sense of aesthetic engagement with language.
6. To help children navigate written scripts with fluency.
7. To provide contexts that support children in using language and literacy effectively for a wide variety of purposes.
8. To help children engage critically with literate worlds.

How Can We Help Accomplish These Aims? Five Principles to Keep in Mind.

1. Language is learned in a social context

Meaningful interactions with others, who:

1. Direct children's attention to salient features of the world, and help to label them.
2. Extend, substitute or otherwise support children's communicative attempts with conventional language.
3. Provide opportunities for the child to use language in different ways in the world, for example:
 - a. Directing one's own and others' activities
 - b. Playing
 - c. Narrating and explaining
 - d. Associating and reasoning
 - e. Anticipating

Implication 1: Child's Language in the Classroom

1. Children come to school with a repertoire of oral language, including home dialects.
2. They use this to accomplish all the functions of language discussed.
3. Schools need to make spaces for children's home dialects and languages in the classroom. Not doing so has serious intellectual and emotional consequences for the child.
4. All the position papers (NCF 2005, Early Language and Literacy, 2016) point to the need for making space for children's languages in the classroom.

Example: Rokka/Dhana

Implication 2: Varied Opportunities for Interaction in the Classroom

1. In order to learn language meaningfully and successfully, children need to have a variety of opportunities for social interactions, such as:
 - Whole Class
 - Small group - differential ability/homogeneous ability - all children engaged in same activity
 - Individual
2. Nature of interactions needs to support all the functions of language
(Slide 5)

Will come back to how to do this in a bit.

2. Language capabilities develop in inter-related ways

1. Children learn to speak, draw, read, write, etc. simultaneously.
2. These are inter-dependent capabilities – one supports the other.

Implication 1: Talk in the Classroom

“In schools, talk is sometimes valued and sometimes avoided, but – and this is surprising – talk is rarely taught. Yet, talk, like reading and writing is a major motor – I could even say the major motor – of intellectual development.” - Calkins, p. 226.

How can we teach talk?

- Create many opportunities for children to talk
- Discuss matters of interest and concern to the child
- Collaborative building of understanding
- Sustained dialogue: more than one exchange at a time

Connect to Anjappa's experience

Creating Opportunities for Talk in the Classroom (Krishna Kumar; Gordon Wells)

- Talking about oneself, objects or experiences at school or home
- Talking about pictures
- Listening to stories, talking about them / acting it out
- Acknowledging or validating children's responses
- Extending children's responses
- Generating examples of what has been said
- Inviting participation from multiple students
- Re-stating an utterance, requesting clarification or posing a question
- Signaling a change in topic
- Providing evidence for one's statement or inference from the text

The Stages of Emergent Writing

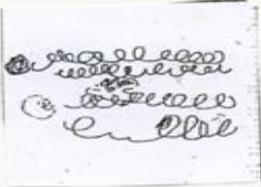
Drawing :
children draw/scribble pictures



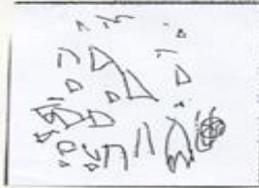
Random scribbling :
children scribble and can say
what their marks mean.



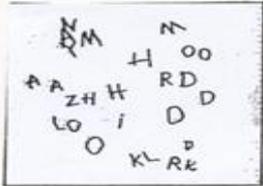
Controlled scribbling:
Children scribble in rows across
the page left to right and top to
bottom and give meaning to lines of
their writing.



Letter like forms :
Children use unconventional
letter forms and familiar
symbols such as circles but
Still give meaning to their
writing.



Random letters :
Children begin to use random letter
shapes to convey meaning.



Patterned letters :
Children begin to use strings
of unrelated letters,
sometimes the letters from
their name appear.



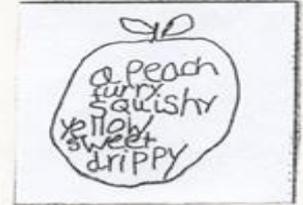
Implication 2: Writing in Early Language Classrooms

- Emergent writing/invented spellings
- Writing for expression and communication

Invented spellings:
Children begin to use some correct
isolated sounds in their writing.



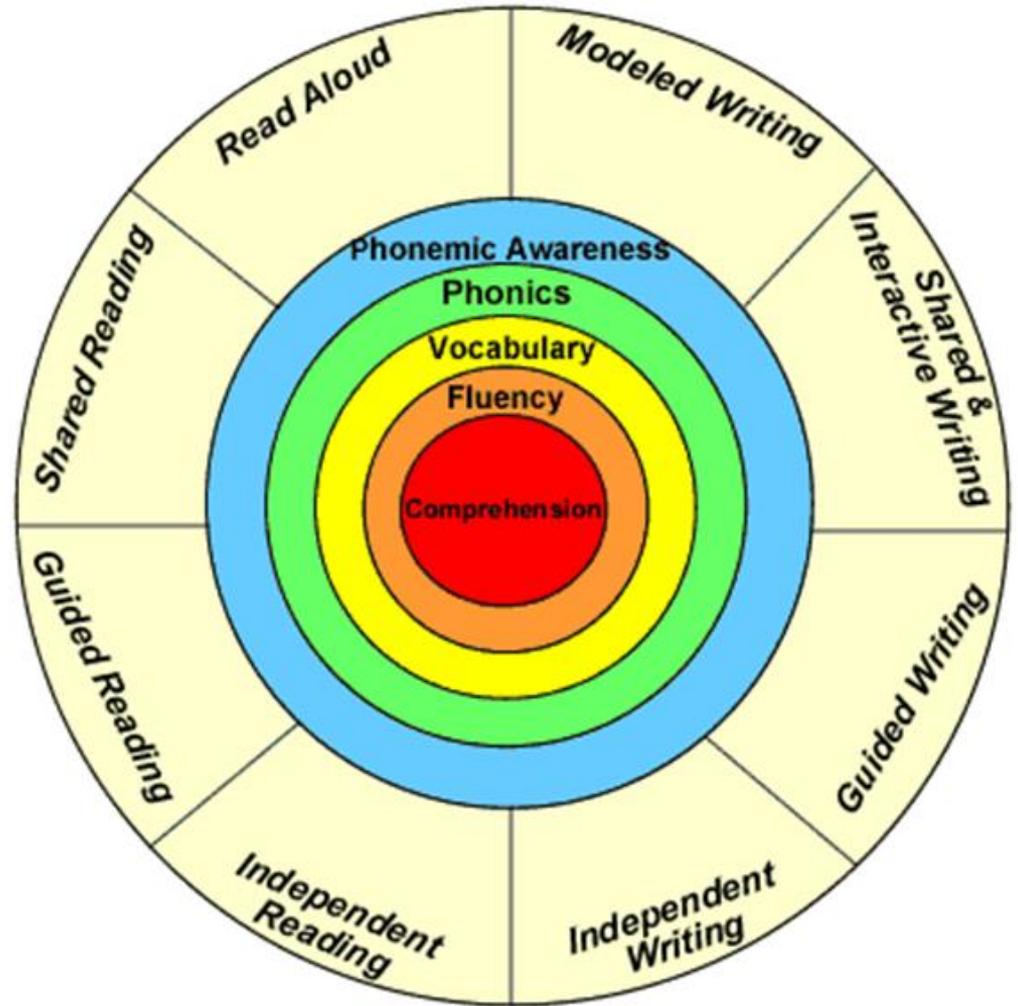
Conventional Writing:
Children are able to write
with correct or near correct
spellings.



At each stage it is important that children have an opportunity to practice and that they can put meaning to their marks.

Implication 3:
Meaning-making should
not be postponed to
later years

A Framework for
Balanced/ Comprehensive
Language & Literacy



What is this paragraph about?

A newspaper is better than a magazine, and on a seashore is a better place than a street. At first, it is better to run than walk. Also, you may have to try several times. It takes some skill but it's easy to learn. Even young children can enjoy it. Once successful, complications are minimal. Birds seldom get too close. One needs lots of room. Rain soaks in very fast. Too many people doing the same thing can also cause problems. If there are no complications, it can be very peaceful. A rock will serve as an anchor. If things break loose from it, however, you will not get a second chance.

ನ್ಯೂಸ್ಪೆರ್ ಮ್ಯಾಗಜಿನ್ ಗಿಂತ ಉತ್ತಮ. ರಸ್ತೆ ಗಿಂತ ಸಮುದ್ರ ತೀರಾ ಉತ್ತಮ. ಮೊದಲಲ್ಲಿ,
ನಡೆದು ಹೋಗುವದಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಓಡುವುದು ಉತ್ತಮ. ಇದು ಹಲವಾರು ಸತಿ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಿಸಬೇಕು.
ಇದಕ್ಕೆ ಒಂದಷ್ಟು ನ್ಯಪುಣ್ಯತೆ ಬೇಕಾಗುವುದು, ಆದರೆ ಕಲಿಯೋದು ಸುಲಭ. ಚಿಕ್ಕ ಮಕ್ಕಳು
ಸಹ ಇದನ್ನು ಆನಂದಿಸ ಬಹುದು. ಒಮ್ಮೆ ಯಶಸ್ವಿಯಾದರೆ, ತೊಡಕುಗಳು ಕಡಿಮೆ. ಪಕ್ಷಿಗಳು
ತುಂಬಾ ಹತ್ತಿರಬರುವುದು ಅಪರೂಪ. ಸ್ಥಳ ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ಬೇಕಾಗುವುದು. ಮಳೆ ಬಂದರೆ,
ನೆಂದು ಹೋಗತ್ತೆ. ಹಲವಾರು ಜನರು ಒಟ್ಟಿಗೆ ಇದ್ದನು ಮಾಡಿದರೆ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳು
ಉಂಟಾಗುವುದು. ಯಾವುದೇ ತೊಂದರೆಗಳಿಲ್ಲದಿದ್ದರೆ, ಅದು ಬಹಳ
ಶಾಂತಿಯುತವಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ. ಒಂದು ಕಲ್ಲು ಆಧಾರವಾಗಿ ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಹಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಒಂದು
ವೇಳೆ ವಸ್ತುಗಳು ಅದರಿಂದ ವಿಭಕ್ತವಾದರೆ, ಎರಡನೇ ಅವಕಾಶ ಸಿಗುವುದಿಲ್ಲ.

3. Reading is a Constructive (not Receptive) Process

1. Earlier it was believed that meaning lies IN the text. Once decoding is complete, reader would hear what was read, and understand it.
2. In case of children, teacher would understand and explain. Children's role was to listen, repeat and remember.
3. By 1980s it was clear that this was not the case: reader brings an enormous amount of information to the text.

E.g.: Which story is more scary?

“Flower and the Butterfly” versus “Ghost and the Dragon”.

Implication 1: Help Children Connect Reading and Writing to Own Lives.

1. Use texts and activities that are meaningful to children.
2. Where prior knowledge exists, activate it to facilitate understanding.
3. Where prior knowledge does not exist, build it first. Exposing children to a wide variety of literature helps.

5. Scripts are not Acquired “Naturally”, but must be Taught Explicitly and Well

- Whole Language: We are “wired” to learn to read and write.
- More recent research evidence contradicts this claim.
- Children do not learn to read and write as they learn to speak, but need to be taught the script explicitly and systematically.
- The nature of the script influences the nature of the methods used.
- Irrespective of the nature of the script: (a) strong sound-symbol relationships need to be established; (b) children need to be taught to “word-solve”; and (c) they need to be coached to read “fluently” (pace and expressiveness).

Implications

1. Children need to be given repeated opportunities to master the Kannada script over the first 4-5 years of schooling.
2. Sounds should be taught along with symbols.
3. Games, invented spellings and other methods should be used to help children “solve” for unknown words.
4. Maatras should be introduced along with moolaksharas from the beginning.
5. Children should be encouraged to form meaningful words from the letters taught.

5. Children's Literature Supports Language Learning in Multiple Ways

Literature serves a variety of purposes in a young child's life:

- To learn about the world
- To understand oneself
- To understand different perspectives
- To gain facility with language
- To appreciate beauty of literary forms

Implication 1: Children's Literature is Essential to Early Language Curricula

1. Resources need to be allocated to building a strong children's literature component in early language curricula.
2. Teachers need to be helped to learn how to (a) bring books to children; and (b) bring children to books.
3. This can be done through a variety of formats, such as, reading aloud good books to children, giving children opportunities to discuss books in small groups, and inviting children to borrow and read books independently.
4. Children who are too young to read can be read to.
5. Discussions and meaning-making should follow reading.

Theoretical Principles Introduced Today:

1. Language is learned in a social context
2. Language capabilities develop in inter-related ways
3. Reading is a Constructive (not Receptive) Process
4. Scripts are not Acquired “Naturally”, but must be Taught Explicitly and Well
5. Children’s Literature Supports Language Learning in Multiple Ways

The Position Paper on Early Language and Literacy (2016) provides a few more principles that may be useful for you to look over.

Next Steps

- To examine Nali Kali in terms of these aims and principles, and findings (of LiRIL and other studies).
- To identify key areas of curricular and pedagogic changes in Kannada.