

English Language Teaching in Primary Classrooms





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English Language Teaching in Primary Classrooms

Contents

Quick Navigation through the Handbook	v
Preface	ix
Chapter 1 – Our Approach to English Language Teaching	1
1.1 Acquisition of Home Languages	2
1.2 Second Language Learning: Some Important Observations	5
1.3 Principles of Second Language Learning	7
1.4 Stages of English Language Learning	22
1.4.1 Early Language Stage	22
1.4.2 Developing Language Stage	23
1.5 Objectives of English Language Teaching at the Primary Level	25
1.5.1 Objectives of Early Language Stage	25
1.5.2 Alignment between learning outcomes, pedagogy and assessment	29
1.5.3 Developing Language Stage	30
1.6 Aspects of Early Language Learning	33
1.7 Larger Issues in the Context of English Language Teaching in India	37
1.7.1 Issues with classroom practices and suggestions for improvement	38
1.8 Desired Classroom Practices for English Language Teaching	41
1.9 Guiding Principles for our Work with Teachers	43
Chapter 2 – Classroom Practices in English Language Teaching	45
Part 1: Early Language Stage	
2.1 Development Areas in Early Language Stage	48
2.1.1 Development of oral language abilities: Listening and speaking	48
2.1.2 Development of reading abilities	51
2.1.3 Development of writing abilities	53
2.2 Desired Classroom Teaching Practices for Early Language Teaching	78
2.2.1 CP 1. Talk and conversation	78

2.2.2 CP 2. Introduction of rhymes, songs, and poems	88
2.2.3 CP 3. Storytelling and read-alouds	96
2.2.4 CP 4. Creating and using a print-rich environment	102
2.2.5 CP 5. Developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics)	116
2.2.6 CP 6. Establishing Reading Corners	140
Part 1: Developing Language Stage	
2.3 Development Areas in Developing Language Stage	143
2.3.1 Development of academic language skills (oral and written)	143
2.3.2 Creative expression (oral and written)	144
2.3.3 Reading strategies for more complex texts	144
2.3.4 Writing with more coherence	144
2.4 Desired Classroom Practices for Developing Language Stage	146
2.4.1 Integrated skills activities	147
2.4.2 Vocabulary-based exercises	157
2.4.3 Languages across curriculum	158
2.4.4 Storytelling	162
2.5 Illustrative Lesson Plans	165
Chapter 3 – Designing our Work with Teachers	188
3.1 Revisiting the Guiding Principles of our Work with Teachers	188
3.2 Flow of our Work with Teachers	189
3.3 Need Identification and Formation of Cohorts	190
3.4 Need-based Engagement Plans for Teachers	194
3.5 Tracking Effects on Teachers' Practices and Students' Learning	213
3.5.1 Suggested assessment processes for Early Language Stage	214
3.5.2 Suggested assessment processes in Developing Language Stage	223
3.6 List of Desired Classroom Practices and their Sub-practices	225
Acknowledgements and Attributions	234

Quick Navigation through the Handbook

1. Objectives and Learning Outcomes prescribed by NCERT

For accessing Objectives and Learning Outcomes prescribed by NCERT, mentioned in this Handbook, see the list below.

Objectives and Learning Outcomes prescribed by NCERT	Page No.
NCERT general objectives and overall learning outcomes for class I-II	25
NCERT specific learning outcomes for Early Language Stage in Class-III	27
NCERT general objectives and learning outcomes for class III- V	30
NCERT specific learning outcomes for Developing Language Stage in class IV & class V	31-32

2. Notes

Certain concepts in the handbook have been exclusively designed as notes to help the reader further their understanding. These are marked by the picture you see here.



List of Notes	Page No.
A note on teaching English in a multi-lingual classroom: Exploring comprehensible input, code switching/mixing and the bilingual method	12
A note on beginning the writing process	55
A note on the connection between oral language (oracy) and reading and writing (literacy)	73
A note on Total Physical Response and its importance in language learning	94
A note on developing sound-letter correspondence (phonics)	123
A note on building phonological awareness and phonics: An illustration from the Class III NCERT Textbook	126
A note on English Proficiency Course	157

3. Suggestions for effective classroom practices

The handbook has identified existing gaps in classroom practices and provides suggestions to bridge those gaps.

List of Tables	Page No.
Issues of classroom practices and suggestions for improvement	38
Providing exposure to oral language: A summary and suggestions	49
Misconceptions about a print-rich environment and how it should be	104
Suggested assessment processes for Early Language Stage	179
Suggested assessment processes for Developing Language Stage	188
List of Desired Classroom Practices and Sub-practices	192-197

4. Illustrative activities for Desired Teaching Practices

The handbook has chosen 6 areas to elaborate on the Desired Teaching Practices that are envisioned. Each of these 6 practices are supported by illustrative activities that can be implemented in the classroom. The 6 desired teaching practices and their associated illustrative activities are listed here.

List of Illustrative Activities		Page No.
2.2.1 CP 1. Talk and conversation	Illustrative activity 1: Talking to children about their daily lives	81
	Illustrative activity 2: Talking about pictures	82
	Illustrative activity 3: Talking about real objects	86
2.2.2 CP 2. Introduction of rhymes, songs and poems	Illustrative activity 1: Conversation songs	91
2.2.3 CP 3. Storytelling and read-alouds	Illustrative activity 1: Story narration without books	98
	Illustrative activity 2: Story weaving	99
2.2.4 CP 4. Creating and using a print-rich environment	Illustrative activity 1: Beginning with children's names	106
	Illustrative activity 2: Making name cards	107
	Illustrative activity 3: Labelling objects in the classroom	108
	Illustrative activity 4: Working with rhyme charts	112
	Illustrative activity 5: Sight words	114
2.2.5. CP 5. Developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics)	Illustrative activity 1: Identifying words in a spoken sentence	118
	Illustrative activity 2: Identifying and making oral rhymes	118
	Illustrative activity 3: Identifying and working with syllables in spoken words	119
	Illustrative activity 4: Identifying and working with onsets and rimes in spoken syllables or one -syllable words	120
	Illustrative activity 5: Identifying and working with individual sounds in spoken words	120
	Illustrative activity 6: Combining and blending the separate sounds in a word to say the word	122
	Illustrative activity 7: Breaking or segmenting a word into separate sounds	122
2.2.5 Illustrative activities for developing sound-letter correspondence (phonics)	Illustrative activity 1: Using word cards or words printed in books, on blackboard or classroom walls	138
	Illustrative activity 2: Using letter cards	138
	Illustrative activity 3: Some other games	139

List of Illustrative Activities		Page No.
2.4.1 Integrated skills activities	Illustrative activity 1: 'Limited reading' of story books	147
	Illustrative activity 2: Creating storyboards	148
	Illustrative activity 3: Reading for information	149
	Illustrative activity 4: Letter writing as a free writing task	150
	Illustrative activity 5: Neighbourhood survey to make a magazine	151
	Illustrative activity 6: Writing a diary entry	153
	Illustrative activity 7: Project-type learning tasks	154
	Illustrative activity 8: Using comic strips	155
2.4.2 Vocabulary based exercises	Illustrative activity 1: Pick the odd one out from the given word lists	157
	Illustrative activity 2: Put suitable words in the blank bubbles	157
	Illustrative activity 3: Add three more words to each list	157
	Illustrative activity 4: Make more words for each category	157
	Illustrative activity 5: Make ten words using these letters	158
2.4.3 Language across curriculum	Illustrative activity 1: Conducting interviews	158
	Illustrative activity 2: Using riddles	160

5. Illustrative lesson plans

Following the illustrative activities for developing specific practices, the reader can get a broader view of contextualising those practices in lesson plans. The lesson plans chosen in the handbook have been taken from existing State Board and NCERT textbooks.

List of Illustrative Lesson Plans	Page No.
2.5 Illustrative Lesson Plan 1: From the Chhattisgarh State Board textbook (Class I)	172
2.5 Illustrative Lesson Plan 2: From Karnataka State Board English <i>Nali Kali</i> cards (Class I)	177
2.5 Illustrative Lesson Plan 3: From the NCERT textbook (Class II)	180
2.5 Illustrative Lesson Plan 4: From the NCERT textbook (Class IV)	182



6. Essential Reading Material

The handbook refers to certain documents as Essential Reading and are marked by this picture.

List of Essential Reading
Position Paper on Teaching of English by NCERT (2006)
Emergent Literacy: New Perspectives by William H. Teale and Elizabeth Sulzby in Emerging Literacy: Young Children Learn to Read and Write (1989), edited by Dorothy S. Strickland and Lesley Mandel Morrow.
Position Paper of the National Focus Group on Teaching of Indian Languages (NCERT,2006)
Multilingualism as a Classroom Resource by RK Agnihotri (1995)
Multilinguality and the Teaching of English in India by RK Agnihotri (2010)
ELI Practitioner Brief 18: Using Mother Tongue to Facilitate English Language Learning in Low Exposure Settings (2018)
ELI Resource Book 1: Multilingual Education in India (2020)
Learning Outcomes at the Elementary Stage by NCERT (2017)
Sounds of English Language; Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read by National Institute of Literacy (NIA), USA (2006)
Talking Into Literacy in the Early Years by Stuart Button and Peter Millward (2005)
The Gradual Release of Instructional Framework by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey in Better Learning Through Structured Teaching: A Framework for the Gradual Release of Responsibility (2013)
LiRiL project (section 10.3.2 on 'Emergent Writing'). For stages of emergent writing please refer to this link: https://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/teachersguide/writing-spot-assessment/stages-emergent-writing
Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game by KS Goodman in Reading for Meaning by NCERT (2008)
Talk by Krishna Kumar in Child's Language and the Teacher (1986)
The Sense of Story by Gordon Wells in The Meaning Makers: Learning to Talk and Talking to Learn (1987/2009)
ELI Handout 8: Creating a Print-rich Environment in Classroom (2019)
Classroom Labelling: A Staff Training Aid, a publication of the Environments Professional Group, (2005)
High Frequency Sights Words List by Dolch and Fry; High Frequency Phrases and Short Sentences by Dolch and Fry; K1 Phonics High Frequency Words
K1 Phonics - Alphabet Recognition, Florida Centre for Reading Research (2005/2007)
Teaching Reading and Developing Literacy: Contrasting Perspectives by Constance Weaver in Reading Process and Practice (1988/2002)
Helping Children Become Readers by R. Amritavalli (2012) in Language and Language Teaching Volume 1 Number 1

Preface

The Azim Premji Foundation was set up in 2001 with the vision to contribute towards a more just, equitable, humane, and sustainable society. The Foundation does extensive and deep on-the-ground work across the country – both directly and through partners.

The Foundation's direct work is carried out through its district-level Field Institutes which have a deeper reach through block-level presence. It is also building a network of university campuses to contribute to capacity development and research for the social sector. The first Azim Premji University was set up in Bangalore in 2010, and the second one in Bhopal will be operational in 2023.

A substantial part of the Foundation's direct work is to help improve the public (government) school education system in India, prioritising the more disadvantaged areas of the country. This work ranges from teacher capacity and leadership development to matters of policy and curriculum.

Centrality of teachers

Teacher effectiveness is critical for good quality education, both experience and research from across the world and our own, reaffirm this. Our work on the ground is hence, significantly focused on the professional development of government school teachers. Our teacher professional development work covers all school subjects and includes content, pedagogy, and perspectives. At a more specific level, it is informed by the needs of specific cohorts of teachers with whom we engage through multiple modes.

Language and Maths

Literacy and numeracy are the foundation on which children's achievements in successive classes depend significantly. It is at this basic level that many children in schools are found struggling. As a result of this, they do not benefit from the time they spend in the school system and for them, the promise of education remains largely unfulfilled. It is to address this situation that a significant part of our current work is towards building the capacities of primary (class 1-5) school teachers.

Handbook for Language Teaching

This handbook has been developed to facilitate our work with primary school teachers in the area of Language Teaching. It is based on our experience of working closely with public schools and teachers for over two decades. It has also benefited from the experiences of other institutions.

This handbook can be used as a practical guide for anyone working with teachers with the same objective of improving language teaching up to class 5.

This handbook details 'classroom practices' for effective language teaching. Teachers who know how to and who consistently implement these practices in their classrooms are, in most contexts, able to help their students attain literacy.

Structure of the handbook

There are three chapters in this handbook.

The first chapter sets the context and situates our approach to the work with teachers in improving language teaching in public schools. It begins by explaining how children learn a language (or languages) at home; what learning a second language at school entails and the kind of challenges we see on the ground. It goes on to identify some broad practices that must be followed in a classroom for effective language teaching and learning. It also, briefly, talks about important aspects of language teaching which need to be conceptually clear to the teacher.

The second chapter revolves around classroom teaching-learning processes. It describes in detail the desired classroom teaching practices that make teaching effective. These practices are anchored in some basic language teaching processes, such as using poems and stories, posters, talk, print-rich environment etc. There are classroom examples of how to work with particular content, what the usual mistakes are and how to avoid them or find solutions. Generally, teachers teach with the help of textbooks, so references from textbooks have been taken to demonstrate how these can be transacted creatively.

The third chapter lays out the approach and process of working with teachers. It is a 'need-based' approach in which the 'need' is identified using 'desirable teaching practices' as a reference through direct observation of classroom teaching as well as interactions with teachers and students. Basically, if specific 'desirable practices' are not being practised by teachers, these become their 'needs'. Teachers having similar needs are then grouped to form cohorts and an engagement plan is formulated and executed around those needs. The engagement plan constitutes a variety of modes, such as focused short sessions, workshops, sharing of selected reading material, onsite support etc. Our continued engagement with teachers informs us whether our work with them is leading to the desired 'effects'. The chapter explains this process in detail. Any organisation which is working with teachers to bring about desirable changes in their pedagogical practices at the school level will find this useful.

Our experience suggests that working with teachers on a large scale would require materials other than this handbook for comprehensive capacity-building in this domain. Additional supporting materials, such as workshop modules, session plans, lesson plans, worksheets, videos, and other Teaching Learning Materials (TLM), will be available with the digital version of this handbook.

We hope that teachers, those working with teachers, and others interested in school education will find this handbook useful.

Chapter 1 - Our Approach to English Language Teaching



Overview of Chapter 1

This chapter will help us build an understanding of the following:

1. How children acquire their home language(s) and learn English as a second language.
2. Principles of second language learning that must be kept in mind while working in the area of English language teaching.
3. The two stages of English language teaching in primary classes, conceptualised for the purpose of our work with teachers in the field (Early Language Stage and Developing Language Stage).
4. Objectives of English language teaching at the primary level and associated learning outcomes (as given by NCERT).
5. Aspects of early language learning: Comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).
6. Larger issues in the context of English teaching in India.
7. An overview of our 6 desired classroom practices for English language teaching at the primary level.
8. Our guiding principles for working with teachers.

We are born with an innate potential to learn languages. Each child, irrespective of race, religion, caste, class and background, comes to school with a command of oral language (often their home language(s)) and certain abilities to make sense of and use language for various purposes. The purpose of the school is to turn this potential into fully functional abilities which will help the child deal with the day-to-day challenges of living in a social set-up, acquire and construct knowledge and understand concepts in various subjects.

The use of children's home language(s) in the early years of schooling, therefore, has cognitive and academic advantages for children. This is the language in which they have developed their initial understanding of the world!

1.1 Acquisition of Home Language(s)



Figure 1 There are many people to thank for providing rich exposure to home language(s) in the early years!

When a child is born, she is completely dependent on her caregivers. She cannot immediately speak and cries for all her needs. But she is not left alone till she grows up and becomes self-sufficient. She is surrounded by family members, neighbours and friends who interact with her, hold her, play with her, and at the same time, using the home language(s) also interact with one another in a wholesome way, including complete words and sentences. This steady and meaningful interaction provides rich language inputs to the child who has the natural urge to communicate and discover the world around her. She begins to babble, smile, reach out and grasp, etc. She listens to the different sounds and the tone/style of using these sounds by listening to people as they converse, sing, laugh or argue. The child slowly starts paying more attention to the language(s) and notices the difference between various sound patterns, as well as the similarities and contrasts in their sequence. Her utterances become clearer and more intelligible over time as she grasps and acquires the language(s) she grows up hearing. The child makes many deviations from the conventional patterns of uttering words and communicating because both, her vocal apparatus and her brain, are developing. Notwithstanding all these imperfections in the child's language(s), she is appreciated and applauded for her efforts. In this playful and encouraging environment, the child gradually acquires the language(s) through an unconscious process, without much correction or intervention by the parents and others. She gradually picks the conventional usage of language and drops her earlier, unconventional language forms.

In a multilingual country such as ours, children are generally exposed to more than one language at home or in their close surroundings because of which they easily acquire these languages. For example, if the child's parents speak Hindi but her grandparents speak Marwari, and they all converse with one another using a mix of Hindi and Marwari, the child will effortlessly “pick up” and use both these languages. Initially, she may not even know that these are different languages! As the child grows up, she may notice at some point that she uses a lot more Marwari with her grandparents and more of Hindi with her parents and siblings – this does not happen through a conscious choice but seems to be rather automatic.

The Hindi spoken at home may also be very different from the Hindi used in the neighbourhood/market or the standard Hindi which is taught in schools. Another situation could be where the home language completely differs from the common language spoken outside. For example, if the family migrates to Ahmedabad, the child will “pick up” Gujarati from her interactions with friends in the neighbourhood or at school. If children have access to technology, they also pick up many words from TV shows, YouTube videos, online/mobile games, etc. The necessary condition is that there should be enough exposure to these languages in the environment and meaningful engagement with them. There is sufficient evidence that children are not just good at acquiring many languages simultaneously in the early years, but are also very cognizant (aware) of where and when to use these languages for various purposes.



Essential reading

Position Paper on Teaching of English by NCERT (2006)

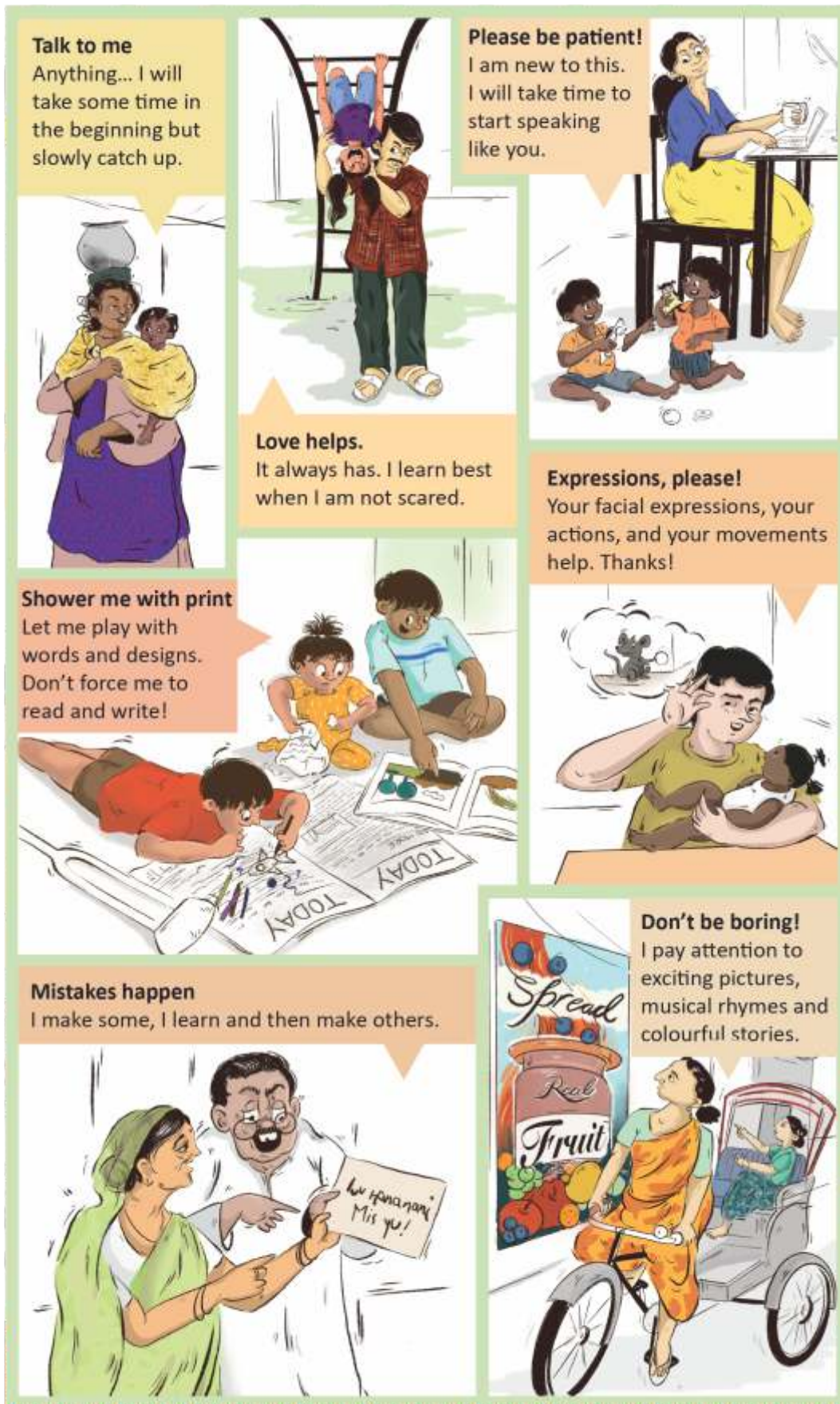


Figure 2 An enabling environment facilitates language learning.

1.2 Second Language Learning: Some Important Observations

- The process of language learning is the same whether it is the home language(s) or the second language(s) (here, English), provided a few conditions are met – the learner gets adequate comprehensible input in English which she is able to partly make sense of, is regularly involved in English communication in a non-threatening environment, is allowed enough time to produce utterances in English and the emphasis is largely on meaning-making.
- The input in English (either provided by the teacher or through exposure to different material/content) does not immediately result in the use or production of English by the learner. As in the case of home language(s), learners need sustained exposure to English without any pressure to produce the language. During this period, in which the learners are outwardly 'silent', a lot of language learning takes place, which is not immediately apparent. Learners repeatedly listen to the sounds, structures, tone/style, etc. and prepare themselves to produce these at a later stage. There are many debates about the 'silent period' but it can be accepted that learners should not be expected to produce English immediately after being exposed to it.
- The errors made by the learner in the process of learning English reflect the developmental stage of the learner and are often self-corrected when the learner moves to the next stage. For example, a learner who generalizes the pluralization rule of adding '-s' will learn through exposure that some words, like 'childs', 'childrens' and 'peoples', do not exist in English. A common assumption is that learners must first master the structure (syntax) and rules of English (grammar) to become fluent. We know this to be untrue as we regularly see children and grown-ups picking up languages from their friends, TV or books without being aware of the grammar of the language. This proves that meaning making happens before the mastery of structure. It is pertinent to note here that self-correction takes place even in the case of home language(s). However, heightened awareness of the rules of grammar may impede the acquisition process.
- Contrary to common belief, language(s) already learnt (home languages) do not interfere with the acquisition of more languages, like English. If we notice learners using the rules of their home language(s) in English, it happens because they have not yet acquired the rules of English. They are not yet ready to produce English but if they are forced to produce it, they use the known rules as a compensation strategy. For example, learners may use words in sentences like 'Where are my bookein?' or 'I cricket play'. This may also be seen in pronunciation, for example, emphasizing the '-ed' sound in words like 'talked' and 'danced' or the '-r' sound in words like 'sir', 'father', and 'mother'. The overall tone/style of speaking is also influenced by the known languages. Exposure to English improves the accuracy of the

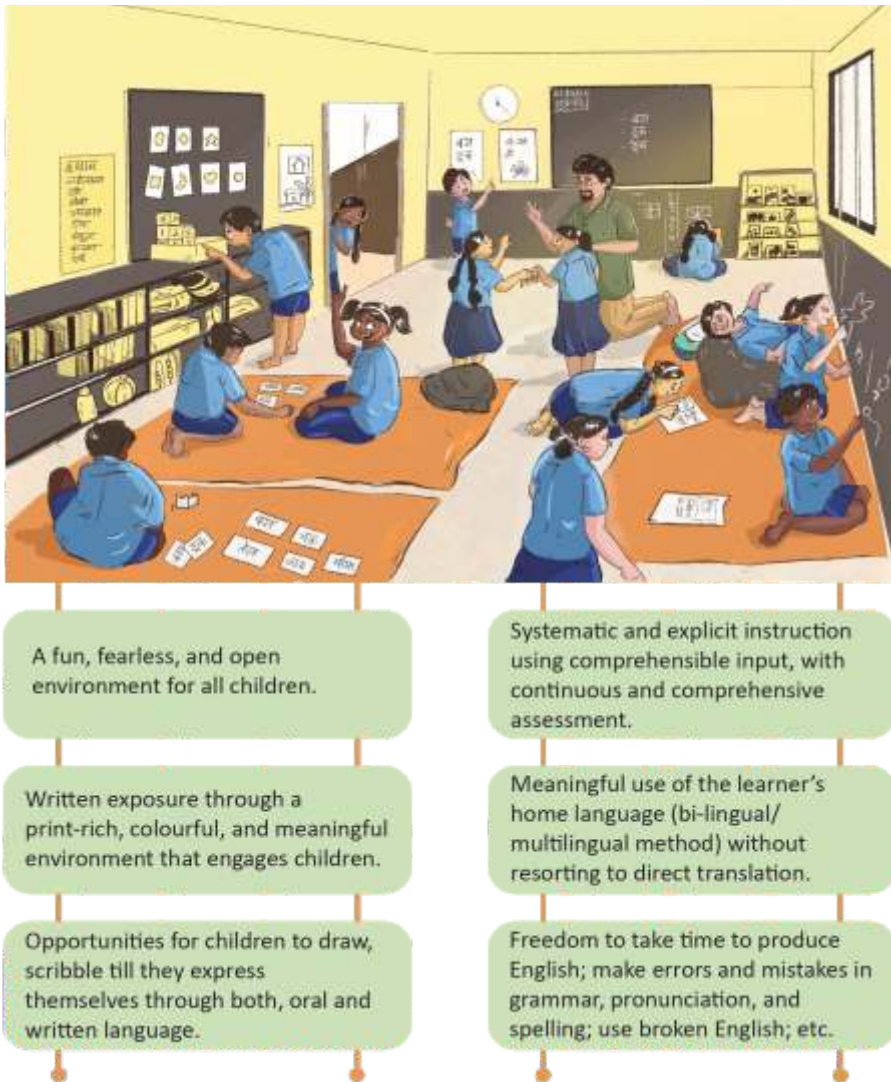


Figure 3 Important elements of learning in a second language (English) classroom.

language, especially in terms of structures and vocabulary. For many decades now, pronunciation and tone/style influenced by the home language(s) of the speaker are not considered unacceptable by language experts, as a variety of 'Englishes' is used all over the world! Language learning happens best in a low-anxiety environment where the learner is motivated and has a certain degree of confidence.

Direct translation deprives learners of the opportunity to infer meanings of unfamiliar words. Learners over-rely on the teacher or the dictionary and stop the moment they encounter "difficult" words.



Essential reading

Emergent Literacy: New Perspectives by William H. Teale and Elizabeth Sulzby in *Emerging Literacy: Young Children Learn to Read and Write* (1989), edited by Dorothy S. Strickland and Lesley Mandel Morrow.

1.3 Principles of Second Language Learning

- A Every child has an innate potential to learn languages:** We are born with the potential to learn language (innate potential). Children come to school with a certain command of at least one oral language – their home language and certain abilities to make sense of and use it for various purposes. The purpose of the school and the teacher is to turn this potential into a fully functional ability. This goes a long way in helping them deal with the day-to-day challenges of living in a social set-up, acquire and construct knowledge, and understand concepts in various subjects. It should, however, be kept in mind that children may differ in their pace of learning languages.
- B Bilingual/multilingual approach in English classrooms:** In early years of schooling, the use of children's home language(s) has advantages for the child as her initial understanding of the world around is shaped through her home language. In this sense, children's home language(s) needs to be looked at as a resource for formal classroom teaching and not as that which interferes or hinders the learning of new languages/subjects. However, this does not mean that all English texts should be directly translated. It simply means that one or two languages that are spoken in that region are used in the classroom along with English for conversation and discussions.



Figure 4 An example of a picture that can be used to initiate talk with children.

For example, a child who speaks Marwari and some Hindi at home looks at the picture of a village and identifies many objects, persons, and actions in her known languages. She even talks about the picture with her friends and independently describes it in front of the class. But she is not able to do all this in English yet. The teacher allows the child to use her home languages and supplements the child's responses using a mix of Marwari, Hindi, and a few keywords in English, for example, house, tree, shop, dog, and bus. The teacher points at the picture when using these English words (in Marwari and Hindi sentences or questions) for example, "Picture *mein kya-kya dikh raha hai?* Shop *kahaan hai?* Kitne tree *hain?* Dog *ka colour kya hai?* *Sabse favourite animal kaunsa hai?* Tell me? *Iss picture mein five cheezein count karo jo tumhein sabse acchi lagi. Unke baare mein kuch batao? In sab*

cheezon ko apne gaon, apne village mein dekha hai?" This gives children a lot of meaningful exposure to English. The teacher does not force the child to produce English but encourages her to slowly use a few English words of her own. The teacher encourages the child with questions like – “What is this word called in your language? I will ask the question in English, but you can answer in Marwari or Hindi or both.” This enables the child to know that English is just another language and is not learnt at the cost of forgetting languages



Figure 5 Playing with sounds across languages

she already knows. The teacher also develops awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) using sounds from the child's home languages (she does this exercise orally and does not write down anything on the board), for example, "'बाटी' word mein se 'टी' hata doge toh kya bachega? Tumhari bhasha mein aur kaunse words mein 'बा' sound hai? Kya 'basketball' aur 'bathroom' mein 'बा' sound hai?"

- C Skills acquired during learning one language are transferred while learning another language:** Language and thinking skills acquired in the home language(s) get transferred across the language(s) learnt later. This is even seen at home when a child acquires more than one language. For example, a child who knows Hindi from her parents will most likely acquire Marwari from her grandparents when they move into the same household. She may generalize many unconsciously acquired rules of Hindi grammar/pronunciation to Marwari or unconsciously draw parallels between the two languages. This process becomes more conscious in formal settings like school. For example, the child may think about the word-order of Hindi and how it differs from English while being taught English by the teacher. Being corrected by the teacher or indulging in self-correction can also throw up such opportunities. Generally, such transfers of skills are perceived as a hindrance or interference by English language teachers, without considering their immense potential to aid learners. New learning builds upon existing learning. In the case of teaching English in the primary schools in our field

contexts, it is better to draw some parallels between languages, without resorting to direct translation. This can be done, for example, by introducing the English counterparts of familiar objects/people in the surroundings and using short English greetings in daily life. This will further build language familiarity and comfort to learn English. Transfer of advanced language and thinking skills also takes place. For example, knowing how to organize one's thoughts, summarize a text or use reading strategies in one language help in the newly learnt language as well.

- D Oral language exposure is the foundation of language learning:** Oral language forms the foundation for learning to read and write the language. It is important to create a variety of experiences and opportunities for using oral language in the language class. Such exposure should include the child's knowledge and experience of the world outside school. For example, the use of conversation around pictures, poems and stories improves children's ability to engage with the content completely and articulate their thoughts clearly.
- E Skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are interlinked and should be taught simultaneously:** The skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing should not be seen and taught as separate skills because they are interconnected and cannot be developed in isolation. This is not to say that one or a few skills cannot be the focus during a class. For example, the teacher could initially focus more on oral exposure to English while telling/discussing a story and later introduce a story chart or big book to help children identify words. (To read more about the interconnection of all skills, refer to the note in section 2.1.3, page 47, 'A note on the connection between oral language (oracy) and reading and writing (literacy)')

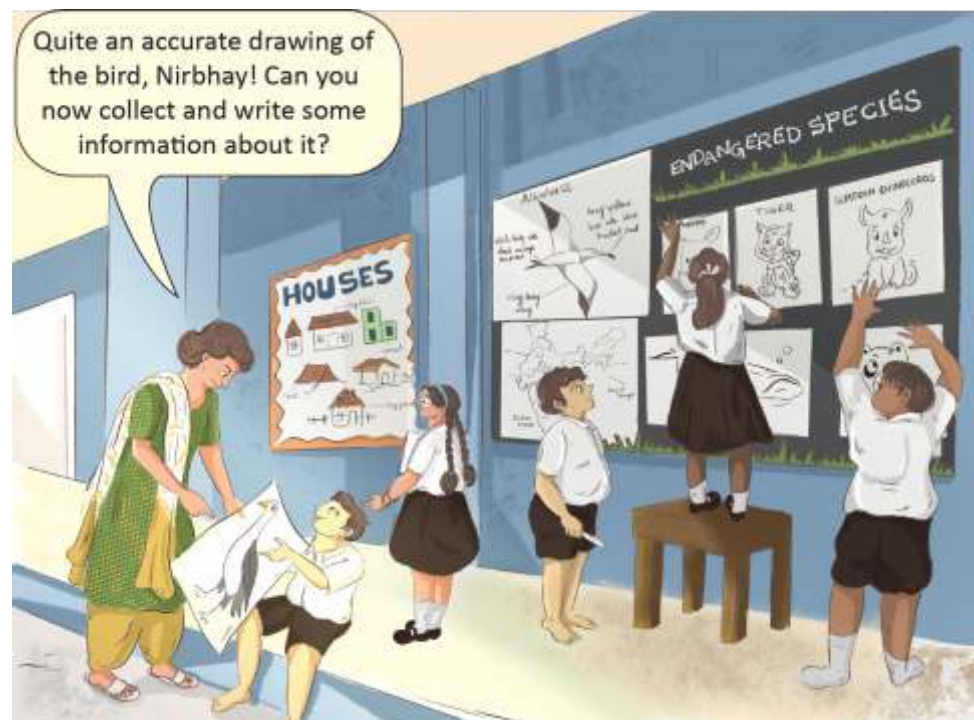


Figure 6 Language can be taught across different curricular areas

F Developing language skills 'across the curriculum': The use of English in the school curriculum cuts across different subjects (mathematics, science, EVS, etc.) and learning situations (morning assembly, midday meal, sports, etc.). This also contributes to language learning. In other words, the learners learn not only different subjects along with learning to 'think' but also develop a greater knowledge and use of English – its vocabulary and structures. Therefore, all teachers and not just the language teacher have an important role to play in the teaching of English. The English Syllabus for Classes at the Elementary Level by NCERT (2006) prescribes a thematic package in line with the cognitive level, interest, and experience of learners. It adds, 'Since all contemporary concerns and issues cannot be included in the curriculum as separate subjects of study, some emerging concerns like environmental issues, conservation of resources, population concerns, disaster management, forestry, animals and plants, human rights, safety norms and sustainable development should be suitably incorporated in the course content.'

G Teach the language, not its rules or content: Teachers must make the learners experience language rather than make them learn it by rules. An example of this is the teaching of grammar. The objective of the teacher is to help learners develop grammatical awareness where she would be able to identify similar structures in any form of content. Therefore, making children aware of grammatical concepts is a better idea than first teaching them rules of grammar.

For example, a teacher may ask children to circle the names of characters in each story and then find all instances of 'he' and 'she'. She can talk about who is being referred to in each instance and give more examples of 'he' and 'she' to help children figure out their meaning and use. The teacher knows that she is teaching these two pronouns but does not explicitly call them so until much later. She can later use assessment tools like a worksheet, oral questions from any text (e.g. a story) or even a language game where children have to make sentences using 'he' and 'she' for their friends in class using different contexts given by the teacher.

H Explicit teaching of sound-letter correspondence (phonics) is required for children to learn a language: It is evident that exposure to written and oral languages is crucial to language learning. Our experience in the field also supports the fact that children do not learn to read and write scripts solely by being immersed in rich, literate environments. They need systematic teaching of the script. Many students, especially those with limited exposure to print, appear to need explicit and systematic teaching of sound-letter correspondence (phonics) and word study throughout the elementary grades in order to learn to decode language fluently. Therefore, while we must provide children with good children's literature, rich conversations and discussions, the explicit and systematic teaching of phonics, word study, practice of script and word knowledge are crucial.

I Assessment as a part of the pedagogical process: If the teacher weaves the process of assessment into that of teaching itself, she can routinely get an idea about the individual progress of each child and plan her work accordingly. Even if the progress is marginal, it would motivate the learner to do better. This goes a long way in improving the learner's self-esteem as they learn English. For instance, if the teacher involves her learners in group tasks that require thinking, discussion, as well as drawing, reading, writing and craftwork, each learner will be able to do something or the other. While children are busy talking and working in their respective groups, she can take rounds and appreciate, as well as give critical but positive feedback to the individual learner about their contribution in the group. For this, she can use a combination of assessment tools like observation (monitoring the child's engagement and use of English), checklists (how many steps of the activity does each child follow), rubrics (to what extent is each child using English while speaking/writing), etc. Assessment in our context is, therefore, primarily meant for the teacher to understand the issues faced by individual learners in the course of learning English.



Figure 7 Individual feedback in group tasks motivates learners and enhances contribution



A note on teaching English in a multilingual classroom: exploring comprehensible input, code switching/mixing and the 'Bilingual Method'

Our multilingual context

India is a linguistically rich and diverse country. The Eighth Schedule of our Constitution lists 22 official languages including Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Meitei (Manipuri) and Nepali. Even so, we all know that the actual number of languages spoken in our country is far greater. The 2011 census saw a total raw return of 19,569 mother tongues – a staggering number for even a large country such as ours. This means that it is very likely for an average Indian to have exposure to more than one language in their home environment and to, therefore, know and comfortably use more than one language in their daily lives.

Multilingual learners and the 'double divide'

We are a nation of multilinguals, and developments in neuroscience have proven that knowing more than one language (either as a bilingual or a multilingual) sculpts the brain's architecture. Bilinguals/multilinguals have long-term cognitive advantages in not just learning more languages in future, but also in a host of cognitive functions. Despite these insights from science, we cannot ignore the debates of language vs. dialect, standard vs. non-standard language, and mother-tongue vs. foreign language. Multilinguals naturally have social advantages too.

Despite the near universal spread of English as a common tongue, it continues to exert its influence as the language of status, power, and access. These have serious implications on the way languages are viewed, taught, and learnt. Let us imagine a young child, Rinku, in a small village of Pindwara in Rajasthan, who speaks a mix of Marwari and Vaagdi. Rinku picks up a few words and phrases of Gujarati when he travels with his father to Ahmedabad each year. He also picks up bits of Hindi from his neighbours and friends. When Rinku grows up, he realises that the Hindi he knows is very different from the Hindi being taught in school. English also becomes one of the many languages he encounters in life, and his multilingual mind is very equipped to learn English, but this does not happen. Not only is Rinku forbidden from speaking his home language(s) in school, he is also taught English using a strict grammar-translation method that is completely disconnected from his life and experiences. This is because it is often believed that the child's home language(s) interferes with the learning of English.

The divide Rinku experiences is commonly referred to as the 'double divide', a term coined by Ajit Mohanty to explain the double divide between English, the regional dominant languages, and the tribal minority languages. Unfortunately, this double divide often results in the loss of one's own language(s) as the cost of learning a standard regional language or English. Erasure of language in the classroom is effectively the erasure of one's culture and identity.

What do the experts say?

The Position Paper on the Teaching of English refers to English as a 'global language in a multilingual country'. The paper notes the different 'Englishes' spoken in the

country and acknowledges the variety of English language teaching-learning experiences, depending on the exposure to English children have outside school and the English teacher's own proficiency in the language.

The Paper recommends a multilingual approach to teaching English, where the child's home language(s) are seen as a resource and not as an interference in the learning of English. The Paper clearly states that the barriers that exist between languages need to be broken, and that the barriers between languages themselves and other subjects/domains need to be broken down as well. This is because the content of any language, be it stories, fiction, non-fiction, authentic material, etc. is borrowed from real life and from different subjects/domains. This is a language-across-the-curriculum perspective and can be discussed separately.

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 and the Position Papers recommended the drafting of national benchmarks for learning. We got these in the form of Learning Outcomes at the Elementary Stage, Secondary Stage, and the Higher Secondary Stage. At the elementary stage, particularly in the early years, the learning outcomes clearly state that children in an English classroom should initially be given the space to respond non-verbally, through scribbles and drawings and/or in their home language(s). Even in the later years at the secondary stage, the learning outcomes clearly expect learners to use their bilingual and multilingual abilities to comprehend a text and participate in bilingual and multilingual discourses. The English classroom is envisioned as a space where the multilingual backgrounds and abilities of learners are respected and appreciated.

The English classroom is envisioned as a space where the multilingual backgrounds and abilities of learners are respected and appreciated.

What does a multilingual classroom look like?

Acknowledging and giving space to the multilingual identity of learners has serious implications on the way English is taught in classrooms, and this is not just in higher grades, but also in the primary and upper primary grades. Imagine a classroom where the English teacher makes concerted efforts to include children's home language(s) and simultaneously develops their engagement with English! How can this be done? What are the challenges? How do children actually learn English in a multilingual setting? To understand this, let us revisit what we mean by 'comprehensible input'.

Comprehensible input and its guiding principles

The term 'comprehensible input' was coined by Stephen Krashen² in his theory of second language acquisition that is widely known and accepted. Let us not get confused by second language or third and fourth language and understand second

¹Ajit Mohanty is Retired Professor, JNU with research interests in multilingualism and multilingual education.

²Stephen Krashen (University of Southern California) is an expert in the field of linguistics, specialising in theories of language acquisition and development.

language to mean English. Comprehensible input is the language input in the second language that is one step beyond the child's current stage of linguistic competence. This comprehensible input is commonly referred to as 'i+1', where 'i' is the learner's current stage of language and '+1' is the next stage of language development. Krashen calls comprehensible input a necessary ingredient for the acquisition of language. The rationale of comprehensible input is that it provides learners the comfort of understanding the language while also posing a certain degree of challenge. This challenge motivates the learner, keeps them interested and defines the scope of acquiring language.

The Position Paper on the Teaching of English recommends using comprehensible input in meaningful language learning contexts, both, inside and outside, the English classroom, with due space given to the child's home language(s). **This means that the form that comprehensible input takes in our contexts is not just 'familiar English with a few unfamiliar words and phrases in English' but a mix of familiar English, the home language(s), and the challenge-posing unfamiliar English.** This distinction is of critical importance because the origin of Krashen's comprehensible input is in whole language classrooms of America where Spanish-speaking children had ample exposure to English in their surroundings and in their English classrooms, if not at home.

A challenge that teachers in our contexts encounter in their attempt to provide comprehensible input is their lack of familiarity with the home language(s) of children. This problem may not be everywhere but is likely to be more common in larger states where the language spoken by the teacher, who is from a far-off district or even a neighbouring state, is completely different from the language(s) spoken by children. It is important to note here that the teacher does not have to be fully proficient in all languages spoken by children in their school; that is neither possible nor expected. Developing a working vocabulary of words and phrases in the home language(s) of the learners will be more than sufficient, as we have already agreed that comprehensible input is a blend of familiar language(s) with the unfamiliar. The teacher is also not expected to work alone, but in conjunction with other staff members, the community, and the richest resource of all – the children – who will slowly begin to produce utterances in English and already bring a treasure of language with them to school!

Comprehensible input in our contexts will give adequate exposure to English without resorting to direct translation and will lay the foundation for developing a foundational competence in the language. Providing comprehensible input in meaningful language learning contexts is therefore the guiding principle of helping children learn English in the initial years. Here, it is also important to note the 'silent period' hypothesis, which states that learners do not immediately begin to produce the second language, but first go through a period of silence. During this time, the comprehensible input provided to learners is of vital importance. Non-verbal responses and utterances in the form of pseudo-production of language will slowly give way to more utterances in English, and these are reflected in the way the learning outcomes for the early years have been defined.

The length of the silent period varies from child to child.

The bilingual method of teaching English

You must have heard of 'code switching' and 'code mixing'. Simply put, code mixing is when someone uses one word or phrase from one language while using another language. Code switching is when the language is arranged structurally and grammatically in other language. The terms are generally used interchangeably, even by experts, to signify the mixing of elements from two languages. Code mixing and switching occur naturally, when there are two or more speakers who know both the languages in question, and no direct translation takes place. We do it and our teachers do it too! In our contexts, mixing the elements of familiar languages, with the addition of English, can be an important tool that the teacher can consciously use for providing comprehensible input. In many of the illustrations given under the 6 Classroom Practices, you will find examples of code switching and mixing used by not just the teacher, but also the learners as they begin to slowly respond using a mix of languages.

The bilingual *method by* itself is a very specific method of teaching a foreign language (here, English) that was developed by CJ Dodson in the 1960s as a response to the other popular methods of teaching English at the time, particularly the audio-visual method, the direct method, and the grammar-translation method. It is not recommended to follow the bilingual method in the form that was envisioned by CJ Dodson. **It should be clear that using the children's home language(s) as a resource in the classroom is to give space to all languages through bi/multilingual conversations in the form of comprehensible input and diverse bi/multilingual material in meaningful language learning contexts, both, inside and outside, the classroom.**

Pedagogical strategies and materials in a multilingual classroom

The Position Paper on the Teaching of English recommends providing diverse inputs, including textbooks, big books, parallel materials in more than one language, media support and authentic material that is naturally available in the environment like menus, pamphlets, visiting cards, advertisements, hoardings, etc. These are not just store-bought but can easily be co-constructed with children inside the classroom with low- material costs material.

Bilingual storybooks and picture dictionaries:

Stories from the textbooks can be converted to make bilingual stories in the form of big books, where children play an integral role in illustrating, captioning, and binding the books. Bilingual picture

dictionaries can be developed by talking to children and the community and finding out words from the home language(s) that are commonly used in day-to-day life. Children can again be involved in illustrating, captioning, and binding the dictionaries. Support from the community can also be taken, thereby building a strong connect between the school and community. Both, bilingual storybooks and picture books, add to the print material of the classroom and are low cost. They can be revisited time and again to develop print awareness, build children's engagement with print and introduce the script – a massive challenge in the English

Stories can also emerge from interactions with children.

classroom. It is better when material is co-constructed with children in the classroom. A word of caution regarding bilingual material – like any printed material, it is important to not just place the material in the classroom but also build children's engagement with the material. A word of caution: bilingual material should not just be placed in the classroom but need to be leveraged/used in activities to build the children's engagement with them. The suggested readings mentioned at the end of this article and the illustrations given under the 6 Classroom Practices provide interesting ideas for building this engagement.

Bilingual conversations: We have seen ample examples of bilingual conversations in our illustrations given under the 6 Classroom Practices. Bilingual conversations employing code switching and mixing has the power of providing comprehensible input to learners, while also expecting them to produce some language. The conversations can be built around topics that interest children, like their daily routines, a story or a picture or any other available input. While the bilingual conversations can initially be completely oral, the teacher can begin writing what children say on the board or on a pasted chart paper. The teacher can gradually begin to paraphrase what children say in complete English and tell it back and/or write it down on the board/chart paper. This can be done at a juncture where most of the children in the classroom are largely comfortable with more and more use of English by the teacher, even if they themselves are not yet ready to use complete English (i+1!).

Illustration

Day 1

Dalpat teaches English at a primary school in Khamnor block of Rajsamand district. He has attended a few in-service programs, where he became acquainted with using bilingual conversations and resource material in class, like charts, flashcards, storybooks, and dictionaries. During his pre-service (STC), he had studied how primary school children should be gradually introduced to English through real-life examples and situations. Dalpat is a young teacher, and he is fairly comfortable with English. He knows that he does not have a very diverse vocabulary and that he sometimes struggles to make grammatically correct sentences, but he believes that he can help his children learn even more English than himself.

On a typical day, Dalpat talks to his children about their morning. Today, there is a flurry of activity as children enter school. Dalpat talks to a few children and finds out that they witnessed a hilarious scene of a tiny dog barking at a camel on their way to school. Children who come to school from another route are equally interested to know what happened. Dalpat immediately seizes this opportunity to make an English story in class II and III today (they both sit together in one class).

After the assembly, Dalpat takes all the children inside the classroom. He starts with a familiar Hindi rhyme, '*Oonth chala bhai oonth chala, hiltā-dultā oonth chala...*' Everyone mimics the walk of a camel and uses actions while singing.



Figure 8 Bilingual conversations on everyday experiences have immense potential

“ Dalpat: Very good! *Aap sab ne bohot acche se sing kiya. Par batao, aaj humne ye wali rhyme kyun sing ki hai?* What is the reason?
 Kamala: Sir, *aaj wo subah-subah hum Peepalki gali se aa rahe the na, tab humne ek oonth ko dekha. Ek chotta sa kutta uspe bhonk raha tha!*
 A few children chip in and say different variations of: '*Ek dog ek camel par barking kar raha tha!*'
 Dalpat: Oh! So, a dog was barking at a camel! ”

Dalpat writes this sentence on the board and reads it aloud. He does finger-point reading and asks children to join him as he reads the sentence once again. Children in Dalpat's classroom have become used to this routine. They say something using a bit of English, but Dalpat writes it fully in English and reads it aloud. The children are quite curious to see how things they say are written in English. At the same time, they feel comfortable to share in whatever language they know, even English. To read short sentences and words, Dalpat refrains from doing finger-



Figure 9 Conversations that are written and read aloud develop a meaningful connect with print

point reading and reads directly. This has helped his children become more fluent in reading over time and rely less on using their fingers.

“ Dalpat: *Kis-kisne dekha?* A dog was barking at a camel? Raise your hands! ”

Almost half the class that comes from Peepalki *gali* raises their hands. Some children also say 'Yes, Sir!'. 'Raise your hands!' is a phrase that children in Dalpat's classroom have become accustomed to. Dalpat uses a show of hands very often during his conversations. He notices that two children who earlier used to respond only non-verbally have also said 'Yes, Sir!' today. This is a huge development and Dalpat is very happy. He calls out the names of these two children.

“ Dalpat: *Arrey waah!* Very interesting! *Par hum baki sabne toh kuch nahi dekha! Bataoge kya hua?* What did you see, Khushbu and Akram? Akram and Khushbu start talking together and Dalpat asks Akram to speak first: Yes, Sir! *Humne dekha. Wo ek oonth na aise-aise chal raha tha aur ekdum se ek uske saamne ek chotta sa kutta aagaya aur wo kutta itni zor-zor se bhaunk raha tha aur oonth na ekdum aise...* ”

Each time, Dalpat paraphrases and writes what children say and reads it out – first by himself and then with children. Some children struggle to read or are listening to a few words or phrases for the first time, but they benefit from reading together. To encourage children, Dalpat makes a few of them read individually too, but he does not force anyone to read. After Khushbu and many more children narrate what they saw, this is what the board looks like. For the first sentence, children enact a variety of ways in which camels walk.

A camel was walking *aise-aise*.

It was tall and brown in colour, just like other camels.

Suddenly, a small dog came in front of the camel. It was jet black in colour.

The dog barked and barked at the camel!

The camel got scared! It turned and ran away!

Dalpat quickly writes the sentences on strips of paper and erases the board. He gives the sentence strips to different groups of children and asks them to arrange them in the correct sequence. Sometimes, he cuts each sentence strip into two and children match the strips to complete the sentences. The class III children are more comfortable with reading. The class II children mainly observe and arrange the strips as per the instructions given to them by their older classmates. They are beginning to read. By the time this activity is done, children have already gone through the English narration of the morning incident several times.

“ Dalpat: Very good! Now, do you think *humein ek storybook banani chahiye?* Remember, *humne ek storybook read ki thi? Kya name tha uska?* ”

Many children speak out the name of the book: Sir, Ranganna! *Wo elephant tha!* ”

Dalpat asks a few children to retell the story briefly in their own words. They do it in their own language.

“ Dalpat: So, should we make a storybook about the tall camel and the small, jet black dog? *Aap drawing karoge?* ”

There's an uproar in the class! 'Do you think...' and 'Should we...' are pet phrases of Dalpat, and he uses them when the class, as a whole, needs to make a decision.

“ Kamala: Sir, *humne wo camel ki tasveer bhi banai thi na!*
Dalpat: *Arrey waah!* You remember?
Tinku: *Aur bhi bohot sare animals ki tasveer bhi banai thi, Sir!*
Dalpat: Can you show me, Kamala and Tinku? ”

Children immediately rush to the window where some picture cards are kept in a basket. 'Can you show me?' is a classroom routine that Dalpat has established in all his classrooms. The moment he says it, children immediately know that they have to find out or point at something in the classroom. Kamala picks out the camel picture card from many others. It has a hand-drawn image of a camel on both sides. One side says 'Camel' in English and the other says 'Oonth' in Hindi, written in Devanagari script. Dalpat asks Kamala to show the card around. As it is time to end the class, Dalpat announces that tomorrow they will pick up from where they left off.

Day 2

Dalpat begins the second day with the same rhyme, '*Oonth chala bhai oonth chala...*' Children were already anticipating this rhyme, so they begin the moment Dalpat enters the classroom. Dalpat asks a few children to rearrange the sentence strips from the previous day, and he copies the sentences on the board.

Dalpat: These are the sentences we wrote yesterday. *Humne baat ki thi ki hum ek storybook banaenge. Kya use aaj banae?*



Figure 10 Action rhymes in other languages also deepen the connect to the theme or topic

There are resounding yesses from the room. A few children are especially excited because they love to draw and colour. Dalpat asks two children to go to the staff room and bring back the 'treasure box'. The 'treasure box' is filled with an assortment of sketch-pens, broken crayons of various shapes and sizes, pencils, erasers, etc. Children always look forward to being picked out for carrying the treasure box.

“ Dalpat: *Ab dekho,* before we start making our storybooks, *thodi planning kar lete hain.*
Pawan: Sir, *planning kyu karni hai. Aise hi bana lete hain na?*
Dalpat: *Planning toh karni padegi. Nahi toh sablog same drawing banate rahenge.* We should plan. Tell me, *sabse pehle sentence ke liye kaunsi drawing banani chahiye?* What should we draw? ”

Kailash: A camel is walking.

Dalpat: Yes, but how should we make the camel? *Wo camel ka picture card lana, jo Kamala ne dikhaya tha. Haan, ye dekho.* What does the camel look like?

Bhavana: Sir, *ye tall hai, lakdo rang ka hai, long neck hai iski.*

Kushal: Long, long four-four legs *hain iske.*

Bhavana: *Aur ye green-green leaves khata hai na aise-aise.*



Dalpat plans how each page of the storybook can be designed by talking to children and incorporating their suggestions. Even so, he tells children repeatedly that they can make the drawing as they please, as long as it represents the sentence they are drawing. As this is the first time children are making a storybook on their own, they need extra support. Dalpat divides all the children into 3 groups of 4-5 children, so that each child gets one sentence to draw.



Figure 11 Spinning experiences into storybooks!

These are mixed groups of class II and III children. Dalpat makes sure that there is a good mix of children who can draw, read, and write in each group, so that they help each other out and learn something from each other too. He distributes A4 sheets and moves from group to group to provide further support. He talks to children about what they draw, the colours they use and how their storybook is coming together. In some cases, he has to help children write their sentences. In such cases, he makes sure that children copy the sentence again in their own handwriting too.

Day 3

The third day is mainly for making the cover page and binding the storybooks together. One group makes a camel eating a few green leaves from a tall tree on their cover page. The second group makes rangoli patterns. The third group simply writes 'camel' over and over again. Dalpat asks all the children to write their names on the storybook.

“ Dalpat: *Wo elephant wali storybook ka name tha Ranganna.*

What should be the name of our storybooks?

Jyotsana: Ranganna!

Savaram: *Nahi! Koi aur name. Hiroo!*

Dalpat: *Hiroo bada beautiful name hai!*

Tinku: Tinku! Camel name Tinku!

Dalpat: Hahaha!



Kamala and Akram argue that the storybook should be called 'Dog and Camel'. Dalpat writes all the suggestions on the board and asks each of the three groups to choose their favourite title. The groups spend some time selecting their titles. There are minor arguments but finally the titles are written and decorated. The storybooks are ready! Dalpat asks each group to keep their storybooks on the floor and move

around to read the storybooks made by the other groups. The children keenly flip through the drawings and compare their own drawings with those made by others. Some children touch the writing and observe it keenly. Dalpat facilitates the discussion by asking a whole lot of questions on the use of colour, the actions and expressions of the camel, the dog, etc. One child says that the dog made by Group 3 looks more like a goat! Dalpat finally picks each storybook (one by one) and reads aloud the story completely in



Figure 12 Bound storybooks are added to the reading corner for repeated reading

English. He asks children to identify words as he reads and asks many interesting questions. The storybooks are added to the bookshelf (there are only 5 books up until now, but the number is steadily growing!). Dalpat thinks that it would be a good idea if these storybooks could be shared with other children during the morning assembly the next day.

What do we learn?

The psychological effects of using the children's home language(s) in the classroom are many and cannot be denied, especially in the early years where children are slowly venturing out of home and developing physically and cognitively. For too long have our classrooms denied entry to languages that we know and use meaningfully in our daily lives. A multitude of recent researches have shown how multilinguals are cognitively and socially advantaged and that language skills are transferable. The multilingual child is well-equipped to learn many languages simultaneously, including English, provided that the teacher makes some efforts to create comprehensible input in meaningful language learning contexts inside and outside the classroom. Let us not deprive children of their language and identity in the effort to teach them English.



Essential reading

Position Paper of the National Focus Group on *Teaching of Indian Languages* (NCERT, 2006)

Multilingualism as a Classroom Resource by RK Agnihotri (1995)

Multilinguality and the Teaching of English in India by RK Agnihotri (2010)

ELI Practitioner Brief 18: *Using Mother Tongue to Facilitate English Language Learning in Low Exposure Settings* (2018)

ELI Resource Book 1: *Multilingual Education in India* (2020)



Further reading

Multilingual Education in India: Overcoming the Language Barrier and the Burden of the Double Divide by Ajit Mohanty (2013)

1.4 Stages of English Language Learning

In effect, the age-period falling under the ambit of 'early language' differs when it comes to the home language(s) and the second language(s). It is usually 0-7 years for the home language(s) and roughly from pre-school to class III for the second language(s). However, we all know that when it comes to English, especially in the geographies where we work, the process of learning generally starts in class I and extends to class V or even beyond. There is clear evidence from the field that learners struggle to achieve early language competencies in upper-primary classes and even later, due to the lack of wholesome exposure to English at home and even in schools (discussed in detail, later). Therefore, we have divided the primary years of schooling (classes I-V) into two stages for the convenience of our work with teachers: Early Language and Developing Language. Please note, these are neither universal categories nor borrowed from any existing theory or model. We have developed these categories solely for the purpose of our work with teachers.

1.4.1 Early Language Stage

Expectations from learners in the Early Language Stage

1. Familiarity with oral language
2. Oral fluency
3. Working vocabulary in English
4. Contextual use of language
5. Response in the form of gestures, actions, drawings and/or broken English
6. Awareness of print
7. Awareness of sounds (phonological awareness)
8. Awareness of sound-letter correspondence (phonics)
9. Attempts to write: Scribbling - imitative writing - inventive spellings
10. Interest and enjoyment in learning English

Early language is generally the initial stage of English language learning which focuses on building familiarity with it for communication and fluency. It is the foundation for a more proficient use of English in the later years when it is used for many academic and non-academic purposes, in a variety of ways. In the formal classroom setting, the Early Language Stage is characterized by building a strong connect between English and the learners' context and experiences through conversations that use tools like pictures, drawings, rhymes/poems, short stories, everyday greetings and expressions.

At this stage, there is no pressure on learners to produce English and the approach is largely oral in nature where learners are given opportunities to respond through gestures, actions, scribbling, drawing and using their home language(s)³. As

³Home language or family language or mother-tongue is the language of used among close family members and neighbours. There can be more than one home language.

learners at this stage are very young and have entered the formal school environment for the first time, there is an emphasis on helping them take interest in English through joyful and motivating tasks.

An aural-oral approach is the focus of this stage, where learners are exposed to comprehensible input⁴. These inputs that the learner receives during this period serve as a foundation for attempts at an early production of English, which may be limited to a few words, fragments of sentences, sentences or simple greetings. This is also the stage when children's utterances in the classroom are essentially an effort towards mimicking what they hear, such as rhymes and poems, greetings and requests, etc. And even though this entails rote memorization, it helps build children's confidence regarding their ability to speak English. At the same time, enough work is done on explicit teaching of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics). We cannot assume that exposure, oral or written will be adequate for a child to become comfortable with the script. So, the teacher must devote sufficient time for working explicitly with the script – though this effort should be made fun and meaningful for children. (To read more about phonological awareness and phonics, refer to: 'Awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics)' in section 1.6, page 24, 'Aspects of Early Language Learning')

1.4.2 Developing Language Stage

The Early Language Stage paves the way for the Developing Language Stage when greater exposure to English leads to more accurate and proficient use, both orally and in writing. This stage is characterized by richer exposure to English in the form of a variety of inputs and texts, like narrations, stories, newspaper reports, descriptions and diary entries.

Opportunities for free and creative expression are the hallmark of this stage, so learners are encouraged to express themselves through different language tasks, like changing the beginning or ending of a story, building a story in a new context, engaging in skits and role-plays, developing projects like a class newspaper and participating in elocution. This leads to better academic use of language where learners develop skills like grasping the main idea/sub-ideas, summarizing, elaborating, etc. Since learners at this stage are cognitively more mature and have already crossed the Early Language Stage, there are certain expectations from them in terms of participation and engagement in various language tasks, like the ability to work in groups, to respond using utterances in mixed language (home language and English), derive meaning from what is written or spoken in English, etc.

⁴Comprehensible input is language input that is intelligible to learners, even though it contains a mix of familiar and unfamiliar words or structures. It is a step ahead of the learner's current language ability. Comprehensible input broadly serves three purposes: it helps learners comprehend the new language they are learning, it helps them learn new words and structures of the language, and it helps them stay engaged and interested to learn the language. Input that is too simple has no scope for learning language and does not challenge learners or sustain their interest. In our field contexts, comprehensible input goes hand-in-hand with the bilingual method. Among other things, both serve the important purpose of helping learners comprehend and learn English.

Expectations from learners in the Developing Language Stage

1. Proficiency in oral language
2. Fluency in reading and writing
3. Enriched vocabulary
4. Carrying out brief conversations
5. Creative expression – both oral and written
6. Near accurate use of grammar in speech and writing
7. Independence in reading and writing
8. Use of reading strategies
9. Use of conventional spellings
10. Coherence and cohesion in speech and writing
11. Development of critical thinking skills e.g. inferring and evaluating.
12. Appreciation of different genres e.g. story, poem, jokes and riddles.

The teacher's role is critical at this stage as she needs to enhance the quality of engagement from the Early Language Stage and must also provide greater opportunities to her learners for academic expression. The teacher must use a variety of content and must also have the skills to select and use them to create interesting and varied language tasks for different levels of students in her class. This is doubly important as the journey from the Early Language Stage to the Developing Language Stage varies for every child. It is not simply a journey of attaining academic competence from communicative competence but a continuous strengthening of communicative competence and a gradual building of academic competence. To read more, refer to 'BICS and CALP' in section 2.3.4, page 109, and the Position Paper on Teaching of English (NCERT, 2006).

The journey from the Early Language Stage to the Developing Language Stage varies from child to child. It involves strengthening of communicative competence and gradual building of academic competence.

1.5 Objectives and Learning Outcomes of English Language Teaching at the Primary Level

1.5.1 Objectives of Early Language Stage

So far, we have defined Early Language Stage and Developing Language Stage and replace the expectations from learners at each stage. To reiterate, we have made these categories solely for the purpose of our work and have not taken them from an existing theory or model. Let us now take a look at the learning outcomes which fall under both stages. These learning outcomes are not created by us but are taken from NCERT. This is because the NCERT Learning Outcomes are being used as standard benchmarks for learning across the country. An important point to note is that these learning outcomes should not be seen as separate for the Early and Developing Language stages but should rather be seen in a continuum across primary classes (I-V).

- Early Language Stage comprises the expected learning outcomes to be achieved by the end of class III (excluding those learning outcomes from class III which expect more accurate use of English).
- Developing Language Stage comprises the expected learning outcomes to be achieved by the end of class V (including those learning outcomes from class III which expect more accurate use of English).

NCERT has prescribed the following general objectives and overall learning outcomes for class I-II⁵:

The General Objectives are...	Overall Learning Outcomes Learners should be able to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to build familiarity with the language primarily through spoken input in meaningful situations (teacher talk, listening to recorded material, etc.) • to provide and monitor exposure to and comprehension of spoken and spoken-and-written inputs (through mother tongue, signs, visuals, pictures, sketches, gestures, single-word questions/answers) • to help learners build a working proficiency in the language, especially with regard to listening with understanding and basic oral production (words/phrases, fragments of utterances, formulaic expressions as communicative devices) • to recite and sing poems, songs and rhymes and enact small plays/skits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk about themselves, members of the family and the people in their surroundings • follow simple instructions, requests and questions and use formulaic expressions appropriately • enjoy doing tasks (including singing a rhyme or identifying a person, object or thing) in English • recognise whole words or chunks of language • recognise small and capital forms of English alphabet, both in context and in isolation • read simple words/short sentences with the help of pictures and understand them

⁵The general objectives are divided by NCERT into classes I-II and III-V. We have used them as such.

The General Objectives are...	Overall Learning Outcomes Learners should be able to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to use drawing and painting as precursors to writing and relate these activities to oral communication. • to become visually familiar with text [word(s)], what it means and to notice its components- letter(s) and the sound-values they stand for • to associate meaning with written/printed language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write simple words/ phrases/ short sentences

Important points to note:

- There is a total of 41 Learning Outcomes (LOs) for classes I-III. These have been re-ordered, prioritised and categorized in the table below (after removing repetitions/overlaps) to indicate the desired trajectory of a learner when it comes to learning English in our field contexts. This gives us 30 LOs to work with.
- For the purpose of our work, we have categorized the Early Language Stage LOs into 2 phases – Initial Phase and Later Phase. Both these phases comprise our Early Language Stage.
 - a. The 'Initial Phase' is where the learner builds initial familiarity with English through exposure to different kinds of comprehensible inputs without any expectation of even early production of English. Learners are largely exposed to oral inputs in the form of rhymes, poems and stories. Responses are taken in the form of actions/ gestures and verbally, verbally in the home language(s), or through drawing, scribbling, etc. This stage helps build awareness of sounds (phonological awareness). A very important point to note for the Initial Phase is that learners need not be completely deprived of print. Mere exposure to print in the form of books and charts contributes immensely to develop print awareness⁶. Awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and print awareness contribute to “reading readiness”⁷. Learners should be exposed to rhyme charts, picture books with some text, etc. but the teacher must refrain from focusing too hard on the written words or letters.
 - b. The 'Later Phase' is where the learner builds greater familiarity with English with the introduction of print (words and letters) in context,

⁶**Print awareness** (concept of print) is the awareness of how print “works” to create meaning. This includes knowing the different parts of a text or book, for example, title, author, front cover, back cover; knowing the direction of print (left to right, right to left, etc.); knowing the spaces between words; knowing the constituents of print in the form of letters, words and sentences, etc.

⁷**Reading readiness** is when a learner is ready for formal reading instruction, i.e. when the child has acquired the skills required to read. Oral familiarity with language, awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and print awareness (Footnote 6) are some crucial elements of reading readiness. Psychological factors, like motivation to read, are other important indicators.

like picture- word cards and story charts. In this phase, the learner is expected to produce some English utterances, though even now the focus is not on complete production of English by the learner but rather a mixed use of language (English with home language(s)). Attention is drawn towards words and letters which help develop print awareness, which in turn contributes to developing reading readiness.

- The Initial and Later Phase are not rigid or strictly time-bound in any manner. The categorization is simply to highlight the importance of focusing on a few foundational skills in the initial few months of the learner's journey to learn English.
- Most LOs of the Initial Phase continue in the Later Phase even after they have been achieved. For example, the teacher must not stop using rhymes and pictures in the Later Phase simply because learners have developed familiarity with oral and written language and can write letters and a few words.
- Early Language and Developing Language stages progress in a continuum. The overall learning outcomes are further detailed by NCERT and given in the table below.

TABLE. Specific Learning Outcomes for Early Language Stage (prescribed by NCERT for classes I-III)

Early Language	
Initial Phase (most LOs continue in the Later Phase)	Later Phase
<p>The learner:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enjoys listening to and singing English songs and rhymes with actions 2. Recites poems individually/in groups 3. Names familiar objects seen in pictures 4. Associates words with pictures 5. Carries out simple instructions such as 'Shut the door', 'Bring me the book', etc. 6. Listens to English words, greetings, polite forms of expression, simple sentences; and responds in English like 'How are you?', 'I'm fine, thank you.', etc. 	<p>Alphabet and Phonics</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Recognizes letters and their sounds (a-z) 12. Differentiates between small (a-z) and capital letters (A-Z) in print <p>Reading</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Reads print on the classroom walls: words, poems, posters, charts, etc. 14. Reads aloud with intelligible pronunciation and adequate pauses a text appropriate to her age and context 15. Reads short texts in English with comprehension, i.e. can identify main idea, details and sequence in a story, etc. and draws conclusions using key words in English

Early Language	
Initial Phase (most LOs continue in the Later Phase)	Later Phase
<p>7. Produces words with common blends like “br” “fr” like 'brother', 'frog', etc.</p> <p>8. Responds orally (in any language including sign language) to comprehension questions related to stories/poems</p> <p>9. Responds to poems and stories in the form of drawings and scribbling</p> <p>10. Can draw a picture with the help of oral instructions</p>	<p>Oral Expression</p> <p>16. Talks about self/situations/pictures in English/bilingually</p> <p>17. Responds appropriately to oral messages/telephonic communication</p> <p>18. Expresses verbally her opinion and asks questions about the characters, storyline, etc. in English or home language</p> <p>19. Uses meaningful short sentences in English – orally and in writing</p> <p>20. Uses nouns, pronouns, prepositions, adjectives and opposites in context</p> <p>Written Expression (towards greater accuracy in preparation for Developing Language)</p> <p>21. Draws or writes a few words or short sentences in response to poems and stories</p> <p>22. Writes simple words like fan, hen, rat, etc.</p> <p>23. Writes/types dictation of words/phrases/sentences</p> <p>24. Writes 5-6 sentences in English on personal experiences/events using verbal or visual clues</p> <p>25. Composes and writes simple, short sentences with space between words</p> <p>26. Distinguishes between past and present times in connected speech/writing</p> <p>27. Uses punctuation such as question mark, full stop and capital letters appropriately</p> <p>Affective (Motivation/Interest/Enjoyment, etc.)</p> <p>28. Listens to, with attention and interest, short texts from children's section of newspapers, read out by the teacher</p> <p>29. Identifies characters and sequence of a story and asks questions about the story</p> <p>30. Takes interest in performing in events such as role-play/skit in English</p>



Essential reading

Learning Outcomes at the Elementary Stage by NCERT (2017)

1.5.2 Alignment between learning outcomes, pedagogy and assessment

There needs to be strong alignment between the LOs, classroom practices/processes (pedagogy) and assessment. If even one of the three is misaligned, the learning outcomes will neither be successfully achieved nor assessed. Let us understand this with the help of an example –

Imagine a primary-level English classroom where an important learning outcome is:

18. Expresses verbally her opinion and asks questions about the characters, storyline, etc. in English or home language

The teacher makes efforts to tell stories using a few English words. She makes sure that her students know the meaning of each story in the textbook. She even writes the questions and answers on the board which children copy in their notebooks. However, she does not plan any opportunities for children to express themselves and their views/opinions in relation to the story, its characters, etc.

The whole year goes by and children have learnt new English words. They know all the stories of the textbooks. However, they find it difficult to express their opinions when asked inferential or evaluative questions about even one of the stories, for example, “What do you think the story is about? Why was the little boy so naughty? What was the reason for the mother to get angry?”

The only questions they can answer are the ones dictated by the teacher or comprehension questions which require ability to read and find out the literal meaning. These are also the kinds of questions/tasks the teacher puts in the worksheets and oral questions for assessment. Such assessments inform the teacher that most of her learners have understood the story well. This satisfies her to some extent and she moves on...

The example shows a misalignment of the learning outcomes, classroom pedagogy and assessment. If the teacher made more efforts to align her pedagogy to the learning outcomes, her students might be able to use language in richer ways, as desired. She may even be inspired to create more robust assessment tasks in her classroom which give a better indication of her children's development as language learners.

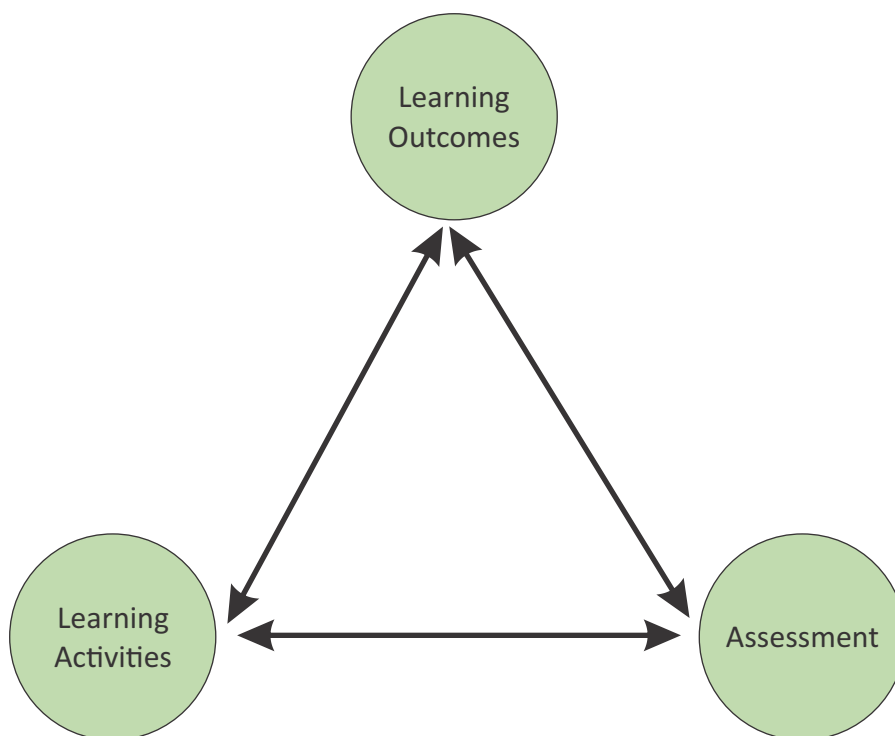


Figure 13 Biggs' Model of Constructive Alignment in Curriculum Design states that the learner constructs his or her own learning through relevant learning activities. The teacher must support the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes.

1.5.3 Developing Language Stage

NCERT has prescribed the following general objectives and overall LOs for classes III-V⁸:

The General Objectives are...	Overall Learning Outcomes Learners should be able to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide a print-rich environment to relate oracy with literacy • to build on learners' readiness for reading and writing • to promote learners' conceptualisation of printed texts in terms of headings, paragraphs and horizontal lines • to enrich learners' vocabulary mainly through telling, retelling and reading aloud of stories/folktales in English • to use appropriate spoken and written language in meaningful contexts/situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • narrate his/her experiences and incidents • exchange his/her ideas with the peers • carry out a brief conversation involving seeking/giving information • enjoy reading a story, poem, a short write-up, a notice, poster, etc. • take dictation of simple sentences and to practise copy writing from the blackboard and textbook and to use common punctuation marks

⁸ The general objectives are divided by NCERT into classes I-II and III-V. We have used them as such.

The General Objectives are...	Overall Learning Outcomes Learners should be able to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to give them an opportunity to listen to sounds/sound techniques and appreciate the rhythm and music of rhymes/sounds • to enable them to relate words (mainly in poems) with appropriate actions and thereby provide an understanding of the language • to familiarize learners with the basic process of writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write a short description of a person, thing or place – prepare a notice, or write a message for someone • write a short composition based on pictures • take part in group activity, role-play and dramatization

These overall LOs are further detailed by NCERT and given in the table below.

TABLE. Specific Learning Outcomes for Developing Language Stage (prescribed by NCERT for Level 2 i.e. for classes IV and V)

Class IV
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recites poems with appropriate expressions and intonation. 2. Enacts different roles in short skits. 3. Responds to simple instructions, announcements in English made in class/school. 4. Responds verbally/in writing in English to questions based on day-to-day life experiences, an article, story or poem heard or read. 5. Describes briefly, orally/in writing about events, places and/or personal experiences in English/bilingually. 6. Reads subtitles on TV, titles of books, news headlines, pamphlets and advertisements. 7. Shares riddles and tongue-twisters in English. 8. Solves simple crossword puzzles, builds word chains, etc. 9. Infer the meaning of unfamiliar words by reading them in context. 10. Uses dictionary to find out spelling and meaning. 11. Writes/types dictation of short paragraphs (7-8 sentences). 12. Uses punctuation marks appropriately in reading aloud with intonations and pauses such as question mark, comma and full stop. 13. Uses punctuation marks appropriately in writing such as question mark, comma, full stop and capital letters. 14. Writes informal letters/messages with a sense of audience 15. Uses linkers to indicate connections between words and sentences such as 'first', 'next', etc. 16. Uses nouns, verbs, adjectives and prepositions in speech and writing. 17. Reads printed script on the classroom walls, notice boards, in posters and in advertisements. 18. Speaks briefly on any familiar issue like conservation of water and; experiences of day-to-day life like visit to a zoo; going to a mela. 19. Presents orally and in writing the highlights of a given written text/a short speech/ narration/ video, film, pictures, photographs, etc.

Class V

1. Answers coherently in written or oral form to questions in English based on day-to-day life experiences, unfamiliar story, poem heard or read.
2. Recites and shares English songs, poems, games, riddles, stories, tongue twisters, etc.; recites and shares with peers and family members.
3. Acts according to instructions given in English, in games/sports, such as 'Hit the ball!', 'Throw the ring!', 'Run to the finish line!', etc.
4. Reads independently in English storybooks, news items/headlines, advertisements, etc. Talks about it and composes short paragraphs.
5. Conducts short interviews of people around him; e.g. Interviewing grandparents, teachers, school librarian, gardener, etc.
6. Uses meaningful grammatically correct sentences to describe and narrate incidents and; for framing questions.
7. Uses synonyms such as 'big/large', 'shut/ close' and antonyms like inside/outside, light/dark from clues in context
8. Reads text with comprehension, locates details and sequence of events. Connects ideas that he/she has inferred, through reading and interaction, with his/her personal experiences.
9. Takes dictation for different purposes, such as lists, paragraphs, dialogues, etc.
10. Uses the dictionary for reference
11. Identifies kinds of nouns, adverbs; differentiates between simple past and simple present verbs.
12. Writes paragraphs in English from verbal, visual clues, with appropriate punctuation marks and linkers.
13. Writes informal letters, messages and e-mails.
14. Reads print in the surroundings (advertisements, directions, names of places, etc.), understands and answers queries.
15. Attempts to write creatively (stories, poems, posters, etc.)
16. Writes and speaks on peace, equality, etc. suggesting personal views.
17. Appreciates either verbally/in writing the variety in food, dress, customs and festivals as read/heard in his/her day-to-day life, in storybooks/heard in narratives/seen in videos, films, etc.

We need to acknowledge that the LOs given for class IV and V may seem too ambitious and unrealistic to achieve for our field contexts. However, they can be used as reference points to share and discuss with engaged teachers. Therefore, it is important that we familiarize

ourselves and our teachers with these LOs and keep them as visible targets for primary schooling. We should also use our discretion to pick a few of the above LOs and design classroom processes/practices for the same. The selection would depend on factors like the geography in which we work, the English language proficiency of our teachers, their understanding of educational perspective, children's exposure to English and our own level of comfort in working on the selected LOs and their associated classroom processes/ practices.

Children in the Developing Language Stage are expected to use English with greater accuracy. Given the challenges in our field contexts, all attempts at English by learners should be appreciated by the teacher.

1.6 Aspects of Early Language Learning

In this section, we talk about the various elements that a child must become good at to achieve the language learning objectives. These elements or aspects as we are calling them, are not the result of one practice or another, they cut across listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities. Some may be more relevant to reading and writing than listening and speaking or vice versa. Each of these is present in all activities that we feel are desired in the classroom; however, some activities may focus more on one than the other. Also, one aids the other, for example, a good vocabulary and fluency aid in comprehension and thorough awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) lead to greater fluency.

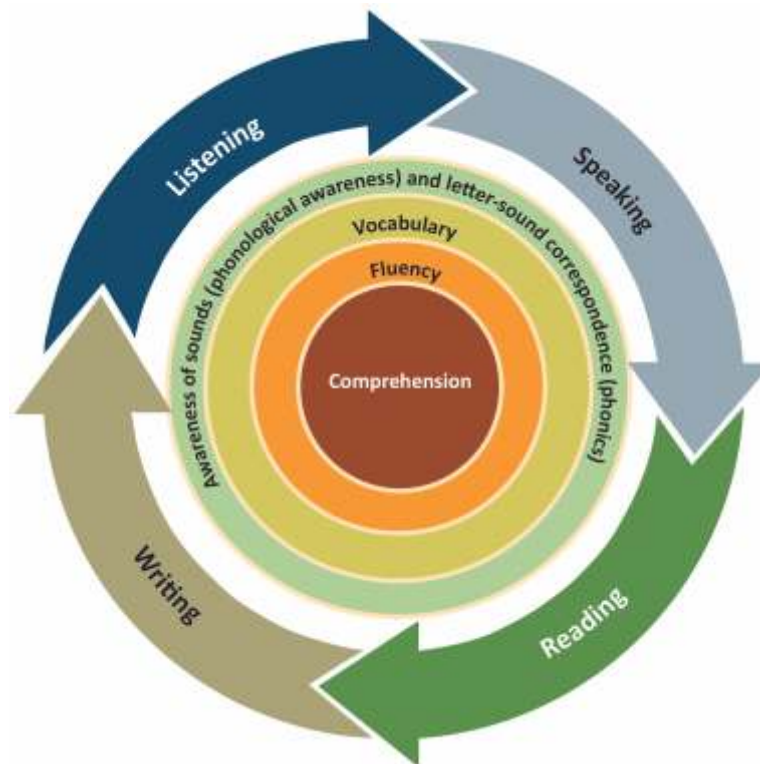


Figure 14 Aspects of Early Language Stage Learning. Adapted from Comprehensive Literacy Instruction model in Indian classrooms, Early Literacy Initiative, 2019.

- **Comprehension:** When a child is able to comprehend or make meaning of what is spoken, read or written, she is able to explain, summarize, give examples, make inferences, predict, defend, distinguish, extend, generalize, etc. Comprehension is at the core of language learning – any task where the learner has made no meaning is mechanical and will arouse no interest. Teachers need to teach learners how to make sense or meaning of what they have read or written – it is a core aspect that needs attention.
- **Vocabulary:** In order to read, write and speak with comprehension, children need to have a wide range of words at their disposal. However, developing vocabulary is not just about 'mugging up' word meanings or lists of words. If

vocabulary is taught properly, that is, through meaningful and contextual situations, children will be able to use the new words in their speech and writing. It is possible for children to have an active English vocabulary which they clearly understand and confidently use in the familiar structures of their home language(s), sometimes without realizing that these are English words. Vocabulary development in the early years takes place very rapidly. Some experts estimate that children learn up to 15-20 words of their home language(s) *per day* in their peak language-learning years! An input-rich language environment plays a crucial role in developing vocabulary through contextual use.

- **Fluency:** Fluency in reading is the ability to read with effective speed, accuracy, and prosody (expression). Many learners in our classrooms are able to recognize letters but read words laboriously either one-by-one or by voicing individual letter-names or letter-sounds. Reading slowly makes it difficult to understand what has been read as it takes the focus away from comprehension and towards voicing the sounds of different letters or words. Building fluency is a key goal in early years. However, fluency is not just desired in reading. Fluency in speech is equally important and generally precedes fluency in reading. A learner who does not use very accurate structures and pronunciation while speaking can still be a fluent speaker! Fluency in speaking helps effectively communicate what is desired to be said.

Fluency-building strategies include using poems and songs, using dialogues in short skits and role-plays, reading aloud, echo reading, repeat reading of familiar texts, and chunking sentences into word clusters.

- **Awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics)**

Awareness of Sounds (Phonological Awareness): It is the ability to hear and manipulate the sound structure of language. This is an encompassing term that involves working with the sounds of language at the word, syllable⁹ and phoneme (individual speech sound) level. Children can show us that they have phonological awareness in several ways, including –

- Identifying words in a *spoken* sentence, for example, identifying the four different words in 'The cat is fat'.
- Identifying and making *oral* rhymes, for example, 'Pat the cat', 'The sun is fun'.
- Identifying and working with syllables in *spoken* words, for example, 'I can clap the parts in my name: Ra-kesh.'
- Identifying and working with onsets and rimes in *spoken* syllables or one-syllable words, for example, the first part of 'sip' is 's' and the last part of 'win' is '-in'.

⁹ A unit of pronunciation having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants, forming the whole or a part of a word, for example, ho-tel, wa-ter and an-i-mal.

- Identifying and working with individual sounds in *spoken* words, for example, the first sound in sun is /s/.

In the last example, awareness at the phoneme (sound) level is known as phonemic awareness. In other words, phonological awareness is a broad term that includes phonemic awareness. Let us look at it in a little more detail below.

Awareness of Phonemes (Phonemic awareness): It is a narrower form of phonological awareness. It is the ability to notice, think about and work with the individual sounds in spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they need to become aware of how the sounds in words work. They must understand that words are made up of individual speech sounds, or phonemes. Phonemes are the smallest parts of sounds in a *spoken* word that make a difference in the word's meaning. For example, changing the first phoneme in the word hat from /h/ to /p/ changes the word from 'hat' to 'pat' and so changes the meaning. (A letter between slash marks shows the phoneme, or sound, that the letter represents and not the name of the letter. For example, the letter h represents the sound /h/.) Children can show us that they have phonemic awareness in several ways, including –

- Recognizing which words in a set of words begin with the same sound, for example, 'bell', 'bike' and 'boy' all have /b/ at the beginning.
- Isolating and saying the first or last sound in a word, for example, the beginning sound of 'dog' is /d/ and the ending sound of 'sit' is /t/.
- Combining or blending the separate sounds in a word to say the word, for example, /m/, /a/, /p/ to make 'map'.
- Breaking or segmenting a word into its separate sounds, for example, 'up' into /u/, /p/.

Children who have phonemic awareness skills are likely to have an easier time learning to read and spell than children who have few or none of these skills. Although phonemic awareness is a widely used term in reading, it is often misunderstood. One misunderstanding is that phonemic awareness and phonics are the same thing. Phonemic awareness is not phonics. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that the sounds of *spoken* language work together to make words.

Sound-letter Correspondence (Phonics): It is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between sounds (phonemes) and the letters (graphemes) that represent those sounds in written language. The goal of phonics instruction is to help children develop this relationship so that they can read and write words accurately and automatically, i.e. decode new words. If children are to benefit from phonics instruction, they need phonemic awareness. The reason is obvious: children who cannot hear and work with the sounds (phonemes) of spoken words will have a difficult time learning how these relate to letters (graphemes) when they see them in written words. Phonics instruction contributes greatly to children's ability to read words, both, in isolation and in connected text.

Adapted from 'Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read' by National Institute of Literacy (NIA), USA (2006)



Essential reading

Sounds of English Language; Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read by National Institute of Literacy (NIA), USA (2006)



Questions for the reader:

1. Are you able to distinguish phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and phonics?
2. Can you share some more examples to make the distinction clearer?
3. Why is it important to understand this distinction? What implication does it have on providing literacy instruction in the early years?
4. There is a tendency to work on letters and sounds through meaningless or mechanical drills. What are some points to keep in mind for ourselves as well as teachers, so that awareness of sounds and sound-letter correspondence can be done more meaningfully with children?

1.7 Larger Issues in the Context of English Language Teaching in India

Our experiences in the field inform us that English teachers generally struggle with their own hold over the English language, because of which they are unable to create a language-rich environment for their learners. Many teachers, especially at the primary level, are also forced to teach English due to systemic constraints, even though they have studied some other language or subject.



Figure 15 A teacher conducts a read-aloud session and gives simultaneous oral and written input in English.

English teachers generally get little or no exposure to the advancements in their field and inadvertently teach English the way *they* were taught in school by their own English teachers, that is, usually through a strictly rote-based, structured, grammar-translation approach with no real focus on comprehension. The near absence of alternative approaches and resources makes it difficult for teachers to visualize an alternative path when they encounter a problem while teaching, because of which they repeatedly try the same approach with little improvement in results.

The case of English becomes more complex because parents are not well-versed with the language and a wholesome environment for it in the immediate surroundings is missing. Children do not have the opportunity to meaningfully encounter with English in either its spoken or written form. They may have a latent vocabulary of English usually comprising stand-alone, isolated words which are mixed and used with their home language(s).

In the rural set-up, especially in government schools which are now primarily accessed by the disadvantaged and deprived communities, most learners have a very limited support system at home. Even those whose parents have received some form of primary schooling are at a near-complete disadvantage. Moreover, a general negative bias towards their background and their ability to learn adds to their disadvantage as teachers do not try enough to improve their learning levels.

Let us take a look at some of the major issues in English language classrooms and possible ways in which they can be improved.

1.7.1 Issues with classroom practices and suggestions for improvement

Current Practices	Suggested practices
<p>1. Limited work is done to foster oral command over English. In some schools, learners can recite several rhymes, much to everyone's pride and even surprise but they largely remain rote-based and mechanical. There is seldom any talk on the rhymes and their themes or the meanings of words.</p>	<p>Encourage learners to simply enjoy and use any language to talk about English rhymes, songs and stories used in class.</p> <p>Use more English during classroom interaction – words, short sentences and instructions, short stories, songs and rhymes.</p>
<p>2. Opportunities for free and creative expression, even using mixed languages in the form of stories, skits, role-plays or other short utterances are virtually non-existent. Playing with the sounds and structures of English, apart from singing the odd, rote-memorized rhyme, are also few.</p>	<p>Encourage learners to describe/talk in detail about what they like or do not like in a story, poem, rhyme or song. Encourage them to sing songs. After telling stories, give sufficient time and space for creating role-plays using a few English words and expressions.</p>
<p>3. In the early years, it is seen that the English language classroom is predominantly an alphabet-teaching classroom, where teachers teach the letters of the English alphabet throughout the academic year, driven by the belief that mastery of the alphabet helps children read and write English.</p>	<p>Write on the blackboard and involve children in the identification of words and letters; make them write a few words in their notebooks or on the board/ floor/classroom walls every day. Make sure this is first done with familiar rhymes, poems and stories and not directly in isolation.</p> <p>Choose a few letters to teach at a time. Frequently occurring letters in familiar words for children can be taken first. For example, the letter 'm' from words like 'mummy', 'Monday' and 'mobile' can be taken before the letter 'j', even though 'm' comes 'after' 'j' in the alphabet.</p> <p>Dedicate some time for developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).</p> <p>Involve learners in meaning-making exercises – converse with them about English words, songs and stories used in the classroom.</p>

Current Practices	Suggested practices
<p>4. Vocabulary is typically taught through word lists and there is generally a lot of emphasis on accurate spellings from a very young age. Because learners have little exposure to written English, they struggle to make strong sound-letter connections and continue to make spelling errors for an extended period.</p>	<p>Initially, do not focus too much on spelling errors made by learners. Let them invent their own spellings. Once their spellings become closer to the conventional spellings, expose them to the correct spellings by writing them on the board or pointing at a chart.</p>
<p>5. The teacher/or a few learners read a text without any stimulating discussions – such as talking about the characters or the plot. As a result, some learners can decode the given text but struggle to derive any meaning from it. Some learners may even be able to recognize a few words from the stories or rhymes in textbooks. However, learners who are used to rote-memorizing their textbooks are unlikely to understand unfamiliar texts, like an unseen passage or a story from outside the textbook.</p>	<p>Try to help children read and develop a deeper understanding of the text instead of surface-level, literary understanding. Ask them inferential and critical-thinking questions which are appropriate for their age. These can be posed bilingually in the beginning. Children should be allowed to respond in their home language(s) and slowly nudged to use more English.</p>
<p>6. Writing is limited to copying from the board or from the textbooks in many schools. Answers to textbook questions are either given by the teacher and/or taken from passbooks, guides, or “keys”. Learners find themselves at a loss when it comes to expressing themselves creatively in writing.</p>	<p>Make systematic efforts to include some amount of writing in each English period. Children's writing can be supported through modelling and giving interesting tasks like creating invitations, birthday cards, notices, messages, etc. Give the children freedom to write in the way they wish to – drawing-cum-writing, bilingual writing, etc. Create a writing ritual such as daily/weekly diary¹⁰, wall magazine¹¹ of small, daily-life observations of children or appealing news from the classroom, school, or village/neighbourhood.</p>

¹⁰ Children could use any notebook where they note down their daily schedule, thoughts, etc.

¹¹ Known as 'Deevar Patrika' in Hindi, this is a collection of student created material displayed on the wall.

Current Practices	Suggested practices
<p>7. There is hardly any scope for learners to use English outside the English classroom. Spaces like the morning assembly focus heavily on memorized information, like relaying the letters of the alphabet, word lists, English prayers, pledge, etc.</p>	<p>Establish routines in school to facilitate the use of English by learners and other teachers, even outside the English classroom. For example, reading and discussing an interesting news item or headline from the English newspaper during the morning assembly; setting-up a school newspaper; discussions during nature walk; encouraging project-work, like making collages or preparing short skits for celebration of important days, etc.</p>
<p>8. Learners are seldom exposed to materials other than the prescribed textbooks. They have either very few or no storybooks to read for pleasure. The school library is either non-existent or under lock and key and often it is filled with books that do not attract learners.</p>	<p>Explore and avail opportunities outside the textbooks, for example, displaying wrappers (toffee, chips, Maggi!) on the notice board; develop accessible reading corners or a library where children get exposed to different print material, like storybooks and comics, which relate to their interests and contexts.</p>
<p>9. There is a tendency to make learners quickly use English correctly (accurately) even though their exposure and opportunities to use English are limited. The scope for making errors or mistakes is limited. This pressure makes most learners fear English and they rarely break out of their silent period.</p>	<p>Become aware of the difficulties encountered by learners in different areas –forms mixed groups of learners at different levels of proficiency and encourage them to help and seek help from one another.</p>

1.8 Desired Classroom Practices for English Language Teaching

In the light of the above discussion, we have defined 6 desired practices for English language teaching at the primary level. These practices help us visualize a 'good English classroom' and develop a plan to work towards it with our teachers. These 6 practices are given below. In Chapter 2, we break them down into further observable sub-practices so that we are able to analyse the needs of our teachers and also track the effects of our work with them. At the end of Chapter 3, we look at the entire list of practices and sub-practices together and also look at the most essential points that cover the teacher's understanding of education perspective (refer to : section 3.6, page 190, 'List of 6 Desired Practices and their Sub-practices').



Figure 16 A vibrant language classroom with diverse learning experiences

Some important points to keep in mind while referring to the 6 practices:

- These practices have been defined to aid our understanding and organise our work. They are grounded in our practice; we do not claim that this is the only way to look at English language teaching, nor does this adhere to a particular methodology.
- These practices should be seen in the light of general principles of language learning and not in isolation. This means that many of these practices come together in different ways to lead to the desired learning outcomes of the primary level.
- These 6 practices are not mutually exclusive. For instance, Reading Corner is a part of creating a print-rich environment but it has been called out separately, given its relative importance in our work. The same is the case with developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).
- It is important to understand why a particular practice is desired in the classroom. This is explained in Chapter 2 and 3.
- Each practice has the same goal- learners should become familiar with English and attain basic literacy skills in an input-rich environment.
- The reason for breaking these practices down to their simplest forms is so that these are observable and easy to follow.



6 desired practices for English language teaching at the primary level:

1. Talk and conversations using comprehensible input to connect English to the lives and experiences of children and create opportunities for oral expression in English.
2. Rhymes, songs and poems to provide a 'feel' of the rhythm and sounds of English and immensely build children's interest, fluency, vocabulary and awareness of sounds (phonological awareness).
3. Storytelling and read-aloud to build overall comprehension in English and vocabulary. Shared reading to build print awareness and promote reading.
4. Creating and using a print-rich environment to give children a rich exposure to written language and using it for reading and writing.
5. Explicitly developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) to help children become effective decoders and readers.
6. Reading Corners as a dedicated space for shared, guided, and independent reading.

1.9 Guiding Principles for our Work with Teachers

Being respectful and sensitive

Many of us who work on the ground will agree that while teaching is one of the most rewarding professions; it has many challenges and pressures of its own. A government school teacher faces many issues, whether it is insufficient school infrastructure and resources, inadequate pre-service training and in-service training, etc. In addition, teachers appointed to teach English in government schools face a unique challenge – they struggle with their own proficiency in English. Therefore, while we support teachers in their work with children, one of the foremost principles that we must follow in all our engagements is to be respectful and sensitive to their challenges.

Addressing the needs of teachers

We believe that it is important to work with teachers on their specific needs rather than following a 'one size fits all' or an approach where we design engagements based on *our* interest and areas of expertise. We also realize that we may not be able to cater to the needs of every teacher individually if we want to create an impact in a sufficient number of classrooms.

First, we identify the needs of teachers based on the list of 6 desired practices and their sub-practices. Then, we group teachers with similar needs in a need cohort and further, we develop an engagement plan for the cohort to address their needs. We continuously track whether our work with them has had the desired effects. In this way, we continue to work with teachers to address their needs. This



Figure 17 A 'one size fits all' approach cannot cater to the diverse needs of teachers

process is explained in detail in Chapter 3 (for a step-by-step break-up of the process, refer to section 3.2, page 154, 'Flow of Our Work with Teachers').

Continuous engagement

We believe that a one-off engagement with teachers is not sufficient to bring about a classroom-level change. We should have a teacher development plan for all our teachers (it could be for an individual teacher or a group of teachers), containing the right mix of modes for continuous engagement. This could be a quarterly plan that clearly lays down the objectives we are trying to achieve, the themes that we will work on with them and how we will scaffold those who need it.

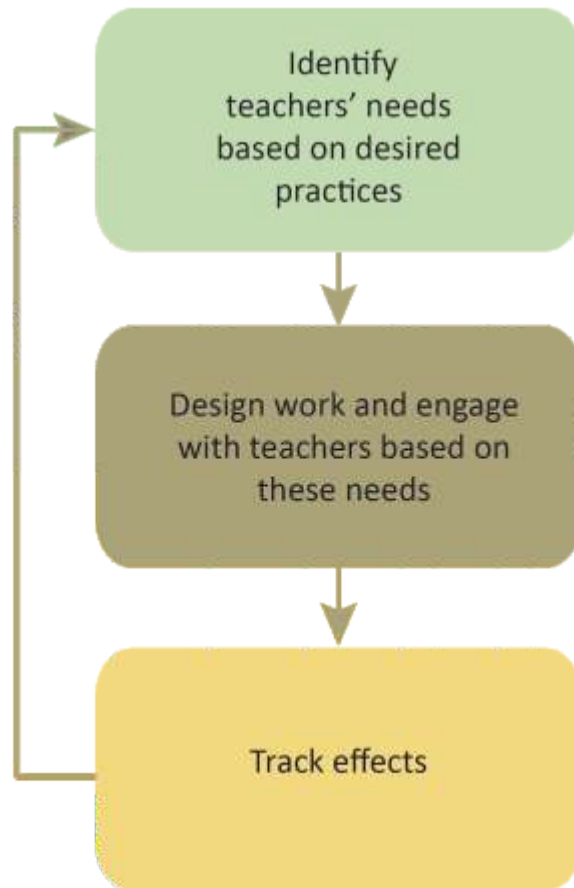


Figure 18 Broad flow of our work with teachers. We design work with teachers based on their needs. This is done based on the gaps in desired practices that have been detailed out in Chapter 2.



Further reading

Early Literacy Initiative (ELI) Practitioner Brief 12: Comprehensive Literacy Instruction Model in Indian Classrooms (2019)

Chapter 2 - Classroom Practices in English Language Teaching



This chapter will help us with our work with teachers in three ways:

1. Build an understanding of required classroom practices that result in level-appropriate student learning.
2. Be useful when we go for our own school practice or provide school-based support to teachers.
3. Inform our session designs with teachers, making these relevant to the classroom. Once we have a grip on the classroom practices and activities ourselves, we will be able to include them in our sessions in a much more effective way.



Please note there are a few essential readings for us that will be crucial to understanding these concepts and practices. They have been referred to where relevant.



There is additional material such as worksheets that will enrich the understanding of the practices and these can be given to the teachers as well.

We have articulated our approach to working with English language teachers in the first chapter. We talked about how children learn language, the realities of English language teaching in schools and our response to these realities. In order to effectively work with teachers, it is important that we gain an in-depth understanding of actual classroom practices that help children learn English.

This chapter details essential and effective classroom practices (CP) that a teacher can use to help children learn English. These cover crucial areas and themes but are not exhaustive.

We believe that children's efforts in learning English should be supported by a variety of contextual and interesting experiences of engaging with the language in oral and written forms in a non-threatening environment. For this to happen, the *Initial Phase* of children's encounter with English needs to be the oral language, a phase in which they engage with a lot of spoken English through conversations, games, and storytelling, etc. The journey into the written language in the Later Phase should begin early on, as well. Teachers need to ease children's way into the written language by working on their sounds (phonological awareness), print awareness, sound-letter correspondence (phonics), providing them with a print-rich environment, helping them build vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. All this is expected to help children become effective decoders¹, meaning-makers and independent readers/writers.

Our framework for working in the area of early language is depicted in Figure 14. Our 6 desired teaching practices are embedded in this framework; they are not mutually exclusive. The four development areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are seen in integration, and not as isolated skills. Comprehension is at the core of our framework, and the development of other aspects like fluency, vocabulary, awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) is visualised through meaningful and rich language inputs. The framework should not be interpreted as 'from the core to the outside' or 'from the outside to the core'.

¹**Decoding** is the process of reading words in a text by blending together the sounds which correspond to letters written in the form of words and sentences. Decoding requires knowledge of letters, their corresponding sounds, and their manipulation – broadly categorized as sound-letter correspondence (phonics). However, merely decoding any text does not ensure reading comprehension. For example, someone familiar with the script and corresponding sounds of *Devnagari* may decode Marathi but will not be able to make any meaning of it. Similarly, someone familiar with the Roman script and corresponding sound systems of French and German language may decode written French and German but will comprehend nothing.

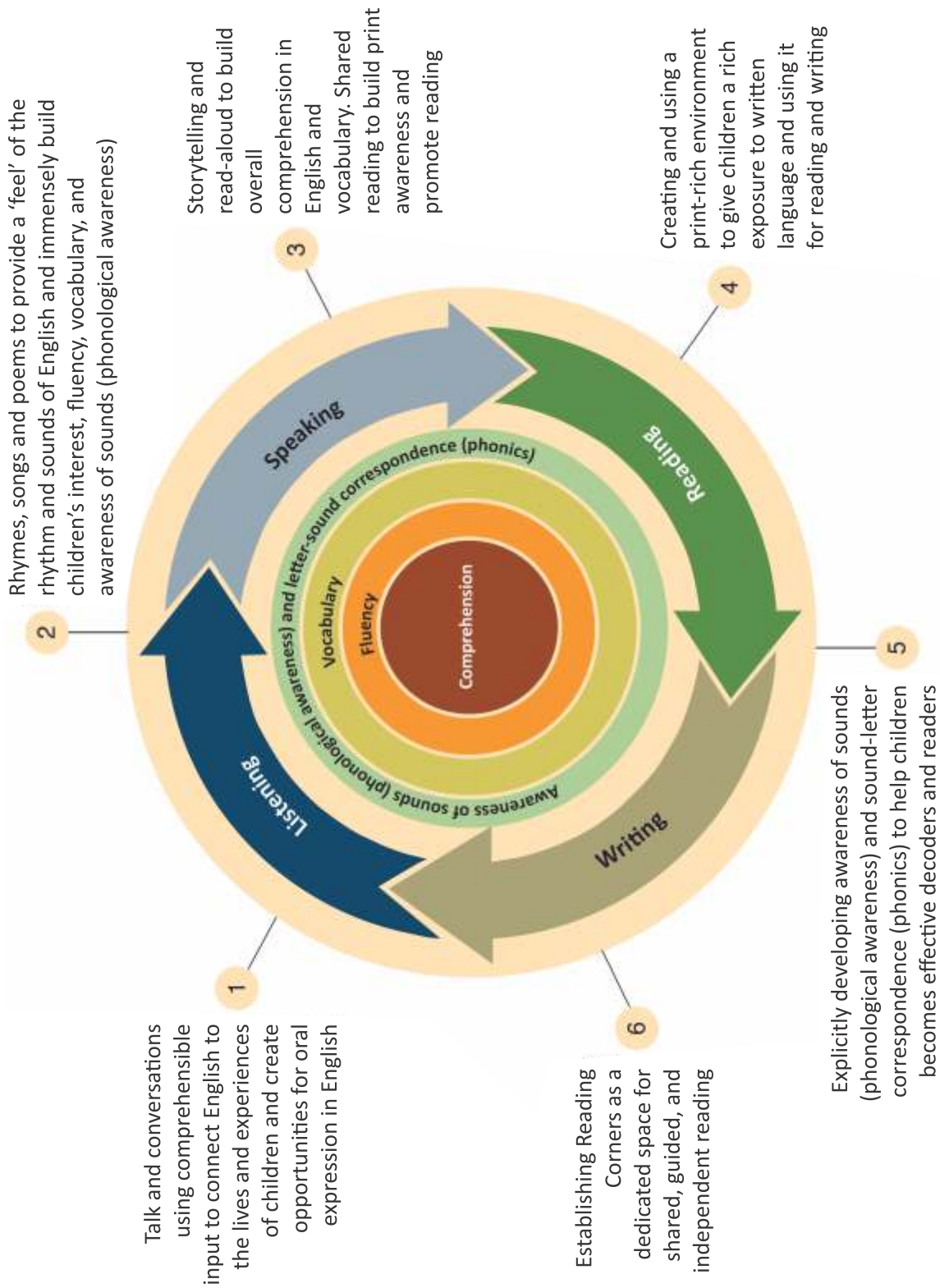


Figure 19

Part 1: Early Language Stage

2.1 Development Areas in Early Language Stage

Development areas stand for the broad skills that we want to develop in the children. While we are identifying three areas separately as, 'Development of Oral Language Abilities', 'Reading' and 'Writing' we must look at these in the light of the general principles given in section 1.3, page 7. Each of these abilities is learnt in an integrated manner and therefore, the teaching also needs to happen in an integrated manner.

2.1.1 Development of oral language abilities: Listening and speaking

The acquisition of home and second language(s) has already been discussed in the first chapter. Studies and general observations suggest that the development of oral language in early learners is the key to their success in learning the language. Listening and speaking support the development of children's reading, writing and thinking skills. Spoken and written language work together to develop language and literacy competence from childhood to



Figure 20 Listening and speaking support the development of reading and writing

adulthood. It has also been noticed that children who struggle with oral language often have difficulties with reading and writing. This calls for a good number of opportunities for conversations, read-alouds, songs, rhymes, stories, games, etc. in the English class.

The teacher should create opportunities for children to develop greater familiarity and comfort with spoken English by involving them in a variety of language



Figure 21 Diverse learning experiences build familiarity and comfort with spoken English

experiences, like looking at and listening to stories and poems and talking about them; playing with words by placing sounds and chunks of sounds in different words and doing exercises like orally segmenting words and blending sounds, etc. This helps remove learners' fear of English, builds their vocabulary and develops in them an awareness of sounds (phonological awareness).



Essential reading

Talking Into Literacy in the Early Years by Stuart Button and Peter Millward (2005)

Providing exposure to oral language: A summary and suggestions

What effective oral exposure entails	What teachers can do in the given constraints
<p>Talking with children should comprise keywords or structures in English so that students are able to make meaning without resorting to translation. This does not mean a teacher cannot use the child's home language, but she should refrain from direct translation, unless necessary.</p>	<p>The teacher can observe what interests children and is related to their experiences in order to identify topics for talk and conversations. She can come prepared with key words and phrases in English and use them while talking.</p>
<p>Students should get inputs from the teachers but also from each other because it is essential to create opportunities for discussion on different objects, videos, role play, local news/stories, etc. at the initial stage. It may be difficult to make children use English, but it can be done gradually by providing them the opportunity to listen to and absorb the language. So, the teacher must speak a lot in the early stages of the children's exposure to English.</p>	<p>The teacher can give children clues and small exemplar sentences to talk or repeat in the conversation she has modelled. She can establish routines in her classroom where children use everyday greetings like 'Good morning', 'Hello', and 'Hi'; short responses like 'Yes', 'No', and 'Thank you'; and collocations/instruction like 'rub the board', 'do your work', 'form a line', etc. This will help children listen to English from their friends too, even in the absence of the teacher.</p>
<p>Comprehensible inputs provide just the right amount of familiar words and phrases for students to grasp the overall meaning and interpret and guess the unfamiliar. Students understand most but not all of the language that the teacher is using and feel challenged to expand their hold over English. This is important because students learn best when the content is meaningful and also has enough scope for sustaining the interest and curiosity to learn. Giving space to the home language(s) of students will also help immensely in this regard. There should be a good blend of both the languages - English and the local language - in the classroom interaction.</p>	<p>The teacher can balance her use of English and the local language(s) without resorting to direct translation. She can come prepared with English words and phrases she is going to use while talking, and continuously monitor if children understand what she says. The moment she feels that children find it difficult to follow her, she can try some of the following strategies – use more actions to demonstrate what she is saying; use a parallel sentence in the home language(s) without resorting to direct translation; use a picture to point out what she is saying, etc. In the unlikely event that all else fails, the teacher can reduce the amount of English in her interactions.</p>

Providing exposure to oral language: A summary and suggestions

What effective oral exposure entails	What teachers can do in the given constraints
<p>Songs, rhymes, games, pictures are useful tools and should be used in the right progression. For example, initially, rhymes could be short and rhythmic and progressively lengthier songs, stories and factual pieces can take their place. Children can also be asked to extend poems or change the characters in the story.</p>	<p>The teacher can recite relatively short, repetitive rhymes where more stanzas can be added by children with her help. This is usually done with rhymes where certain words are easily substituted, for example, 'Peel, peel, banana' and 'Row, row, row your boat'. As children build their own rhymes, they become more fluent and confident in English. Over time, the same can be done with stories where the teacher asks children to substitute the names of characters, add more characters, or add more dialogues/scenes to the story.</p>
<p>The teacher should speak slowly with appropriate pauses using actions, gestures and expressions and give time to students to focus and follow. Talk should have enough familiar words and phrases for students to grasp the overall meaning and interpret and guess the unfamiliar.</p>	<p>The teacher can attend platforms like VTFs/English Proficiency Course to improve their own command over English. She can also make more deliberate efforts while talking to children and keep their speech as animated as possible by using lots of actions and expression. She can encourage children to repeat what she says to increase pseudo-production of English. She must ask children a mix of comprehension questions to check if they are able to follow what is happening in class.</p>
<p>Errors and mistakes can be self-corrected by students through sustained language exposure where there are enough opportunities for students to observe and discover. Those that pertain to pronunciation, spellings, etc. do not require to be immediately corrected. The thing to keep in mind here is that the early production of language should not be coerced.</p>	<p>The teacher can give sustained exposure to English and create sufficient opportunities for children to respond – either non-verbally or in any language/using broken English. If children make a mistake, she should initially not worry about it. As children show greater comfort with English, the teacher can model the correct use of English (either in speech or writing) without directly pointing out the child's mistake. When children listen to the English used by the teacher and other friends, they begin to 'auto-correct' their use of English alongside. The teacher can also give children sufficient exposure to print through extensive reading opportunities like reading storybooks. Written exposure also helps children correct small errors they make while using English.</p>

2.1.2 Development of reading abilities

Reading, as understood by us, is the ability to make meaning of the content presented through a script – a system of written symbols – which involves not just the alphabet but also an understanding of how different letters of an alphabet make words and sentences using certain conventions or rules and also the way written language is used to convey different messages/intents/narratives, etc. in a variety of forms and styles. This ability is developed through familiarity and meaningful engagement with, as well as opportunities for, reading a good variety of text.

The Process of Reading



Figure 22 Making children comfortable with the script using name charts

When we read, two simultaneous processes happen in our mind: sounds suggest words, words are clubbed together into chunks and hypotheses are made about the meaning; and predictions are made about the content, like what would come next, questions about the people involved and what they would do next, etc. So, reading is much more than merely decoding the text. It is a combination of many processes.

In the Early Language Stage, this involves making children comfortable with the script – such that a child is able to decode, as well as make meaning out of simple texts. Teachers need to focus on sound-letter correspondence, building children's vocabulary, fluency and comprehension, to help them become independent readers. This cannot be done by solely working on the written language – children need to have sufficient familiarity with the oral language and a thorough awareness of sounds (phonological awareness). The material used for reading should also be connected to context and interest of the reader.

Reading is best developed through the **gradual release of responsibility framework** where teachers initially take all the responsibility for reading and slowly “release” the responsibility to students so that they become independent readers. The teacher behaves like a “model” and begins with **modelled reading**, for example, storytelling or read-aloud sessions using as many actions and expression possible. As children develop familiarity with words and strengthen their sound-letter correspondence through other allied activities, the teacher involves them in **shared reading** activities. Here, the text is written in big books or story charts and the teacher reads using techniques, like finger-pointing. The teacher involves children in reading different words and asks children to repeat after her or read alongside her. It is of tremendous help to children if all forms of reading take place repeatedly using familiar texts.

This routine is exciting for children as it helps them improve their reading each time, they read by observing their teacher and friends. They develop mastery and an almost automaticity over frequently occurring words or sight words, which further develops their fluency. Once children become fairly confident with shared reading, the teacher can move to **guided reading activities** where she helps children make their own attempts to read an unfamiliar text. The selection of text at this stage should be such that children recognize many of the words (comprehensible input) but also get exposed to new words which they make attempts to read with the help of their teacher and friends. As children become more confident and are able to read with less support from the teacher, they move towards **independent reading**.



Figure 23 The responsibility for reading can gradually be "released" to students

An important point to note is that the teacher's role is crucial at every stage so that children comprehend what they read. As the case of a story, the teacher must talk about the given story, ask questions, and create opportunities for children to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words. It is also important to note that children at any stage of reading may be drawn to storybooks or other written material which they are not yet able to fully comprehend or read independently. Such print material should be kept away from them. The more attempts children make to read and the more they are exposed to different forms of print, the quicker they will be able to read independently.

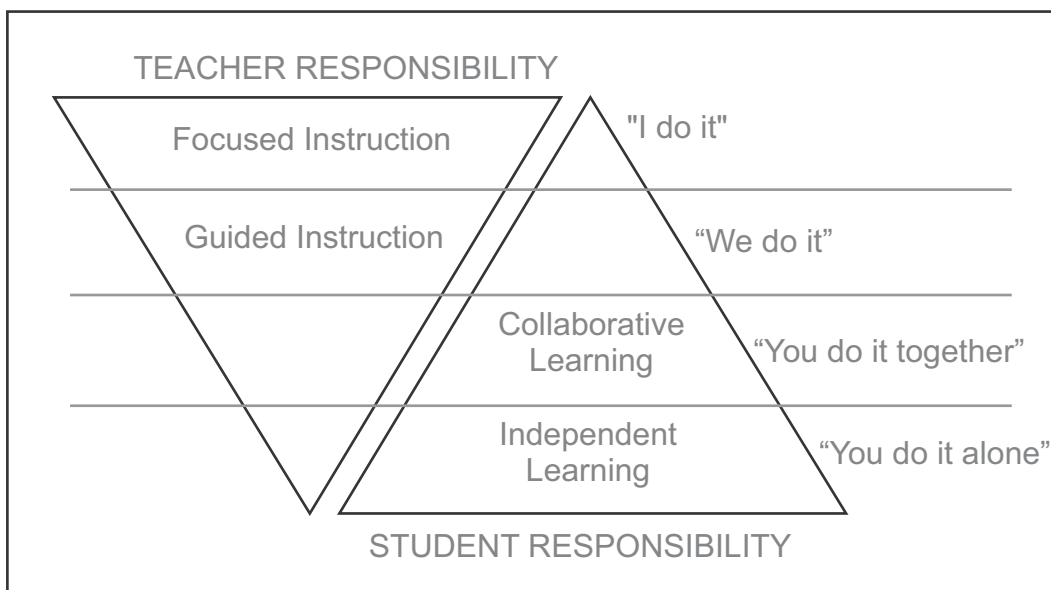


Figure 24 The Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework (Fisher and Frey, 2013)



Essential Reading

The Gradual Release of Instructional Framework by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey in *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching: A Framework for the Gradual Release of Responsibility* (2013)²

2.1.3 Development of writing abilities

Writing involves organizing and logically sequencing one's experiences/ events/ thoughts and ideas using the written symbols/the script used for representing the language in which one can think and speak. However, this seemingly simple process involves a lot of efforts on the part of the learner who is learning to write, and especially in a second language in which she is not in the practice of forming her thoughts.

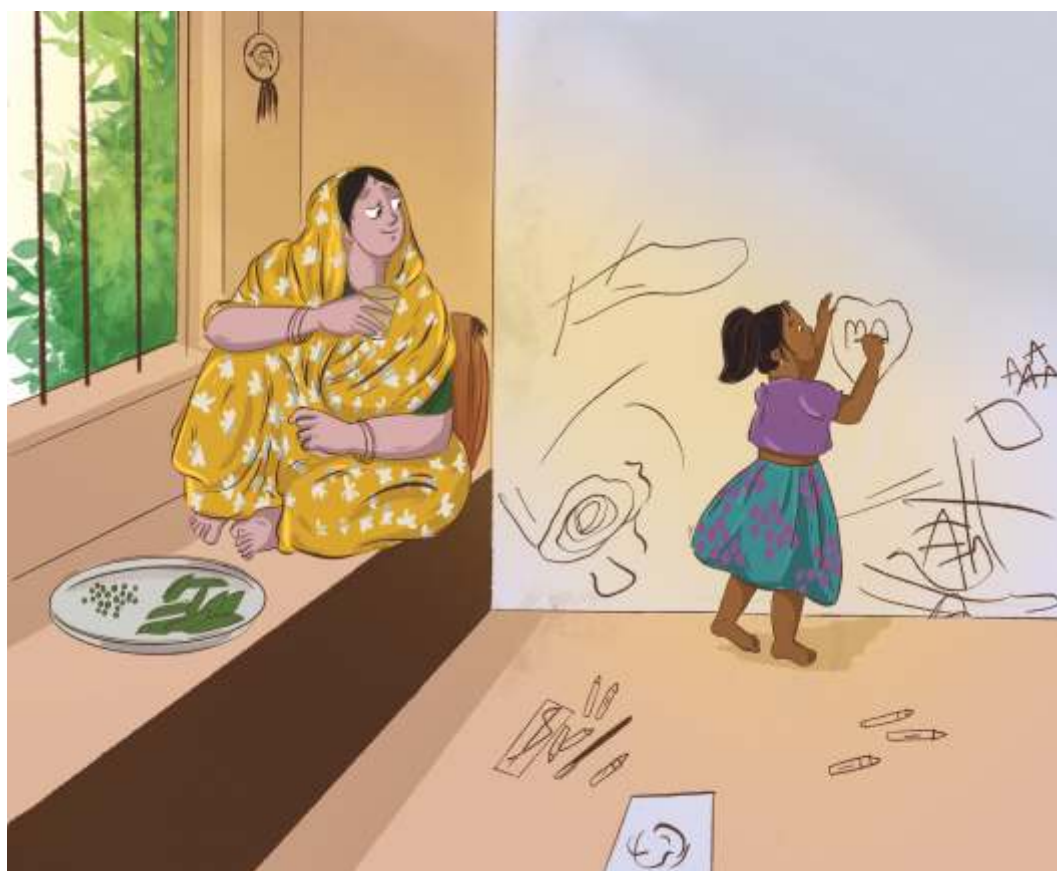


Figure 25 Children exhibit a natural inclination to participate in the written world

In young children, the process begins with drawing and scribbling along with abundant exposure to oral and written forms of the language. This is so because children communicate their messages through drawing and scribbling before they master the conventional script and thereby, develop the understanding that written language is 'speech in writing' – we can write what we speak. Secondly, exposure to a variety of texts/genres helps children understand conventions of written language – formats, styles and tones as expressed in the written medium. And, exposure to

²Can be accessed here - http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/113006/chapters/Learning,_or-Not-Learning,-in-School.aspx

and use of the oral form of the (target) language make them start thinking in that language and thereby, develop in children the ability to write their own thoughts, ideas and experiences in their own language/style.

Hence, it is important for teachers to understand that only focusing on the mechanical aspect of writing the English alphabet and a few words cannot go very far in developing writing skills because overall proficiency in English is the necessary foundation on which literacy skills get built.

While such exposure is important, equally important is designing explicit activities that help children develop an awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) and practising it sufficiently, through fun and meaningful ways.



A note on beginning the writing process

Associated Learning Outcomes –

- Responds to poems and stories in the form of drawings and scribbling
- Can draw a picture with the help of oral instructions
- Draws or writes a few words or short sentences in response to poems and stories

Children today are surrounded by a world of print and symbols through food wrappers, hoardings, vehicle number plates, *kaccha* bills, newspapers, etc. This print is available in English and other languages. The written script (or symbol) is usually supplemented by a distinct colour and design to make a product stand out. Children are aware that these 'shapes' carry some meaning, for example, if a child wants a particular brand of chips, you cannot fool her by giving some other brand. She will immediately know just by looking at the wrapper! This happens because the child has associated the chips she likes with the lettering and colours on the packet.

Children also observe reading and writing activities from their surroundings. They may even try to mimic their older sibling doing homework, the shopkeeper making a bill, the bus conductor giving a ticket or the doctor writing a prescription. Even a child who does not have reading or writing material at home may develop *some* notion of print before coming to school.

In addition to using existing symbols, children also have the ability to make symbols of their own, for example, they scribble and draw on the walls or ground using pieces of coal, crayon, or chalk. These symbols may be completely meaningless to us adults and we may even discourage children from drawing these, however, these may have a meaning close to them. For example, a scribble in black may stand for a buffalo a child sees every day and loves.

Such abilities to match and distinguish patterns, use and create symbols, and assign meaning to them are present in all humans, even in a very young child. They help us make sense of the world and must be utilized to teach the English language. There is a good chance that such abilities are ignored, especially in the initial stages. Just as children develop oral language familiarity through rich oral exposure, they prepare themselves for reading and writing through engagement with print. We have already discussed how children in the *Initial Phase* need not be completely deprived of print and that the exposure to a print-rich environment, creates greater awareness of print and makes children ready for reading.

Let us understand this with the help of an example –

Children can be asked to bring food wrappers from home and talk about those. The teacher can ask various questions so that children share their thoughts and feelings. She can direct their attention to words written on the blackboard during the conversation and those printed on the food wrappers. The teacher can ask children to draw their own wrappers and try to copy the words written on real ones. She can



Figure 26 Various stages of writing development—from scribbling to more conventional forms

also design other tasks, like making a shopping list so that children can respond through more scribbles and drawings. These can be explained by the children when the teacher asks them what they have written. The teacher can, in turn, write a summary of what the children say, in the children's notebooks.

Such beginning writing tasks are not just for fun, passing time or developing children's motor skills but they prepare children for writing by helping them associate meaning to symbols and print. Emergent writing skills of early learners occur in stages – drawing and imitative writing, copying words, writing strings of letters, making inventive spelling, and finally towards conventional spelling and writing. There are a few examples of emergent writing tasks in the practices listed below. They are woven with other activities to illustrate how emergent writing goes hand-in-hand with the development of other language skills.



Questions for the reader

1. Can you think of more emergent writing tasks which can be realistically done in the classrooms of our field contexts?
2. When should a teacher initiate emergent writing tasks in her classroom?



Essential reading

LIRIL project (section 10.3.2 on 'Emergent Writing'). For stages of emergent writing, please refer to this link-

<https://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/teachersguide/writing-spot-assessment/stages-emergent-writing>



Figure 27 An authentic writing task for beginners



A Note on Development of Writing Skills Among Young Learners

How to begin and continue working on children's writing skills

The beginning

We have read in the previous section how young children develop the concept of writing and slowly begin to learn to express themselves through conventional forms of writing and script. For them, the conventional script/print makes sense when they realise that they can use it for some specific purposes, as are served by just like those of drawing and scribbling, which, to them, are important tools for self-expression and understanding the world and the things happening around them. Incidentally, their love for drawing and scribbling also helps them develop eye-hand coordination and strengthen their grip on the pencil. While drawing and scribbling continues, the teachers can introduce conventional form of expression and communication to the children, which generally begins with the introduction and reinforcement of letters of the English alphabet, followed by reading and writing of words and sentences. However, given the kind of language learning environment we have in our schools, children mostly copy or write the memorised content in the name of writing. Can there be more organic ways of helping children learn to write in English or bilingually without depending on the what the teacher writes on the board or one's own memory?

Focus should be on language learning along with learning to read and write in that language

Those of us who have been working closely with children in the field know that learning to read and write becomes easy if the children know the language (here, English). The pace of learning a new language depends on the amount of input the child receives in the target language/English. That, along with repeated exposure to the script and opportunity to master the script without the boring drill, makes it possible for children to develop enough interest in writing to be able to use this tool for various purposes right from the early years of their academic life.

Erroneous beliefs about development of writing skills

Many of us believe that children learn to write through continuous practice using a good model, like copying down well-written and grammatically correct compositions and answers from a so-called 'good source'. Hence, we find a majority of English teachers writing down things on the board and having the students note them down in their copies to be rote-learned and reproduced in the examinations. Some of them even resort to prescribing some guidebooks to the students from where the students must note down the answers in their English copies and give them to their teachers for customary checking. This, as many of us rightly feel, does not help students become good at writing and can, at the best, make students reproduce certain things, like letters, notices, messages, etc. through memorisation and some intelligent modifications according to the requirement. However, ability to write for a variety of purposes, including voicing one's opinions and views on happenings and issues, as well as creative expression, makes it necessary that children get opportunities, at least in the language classes, to express themselves

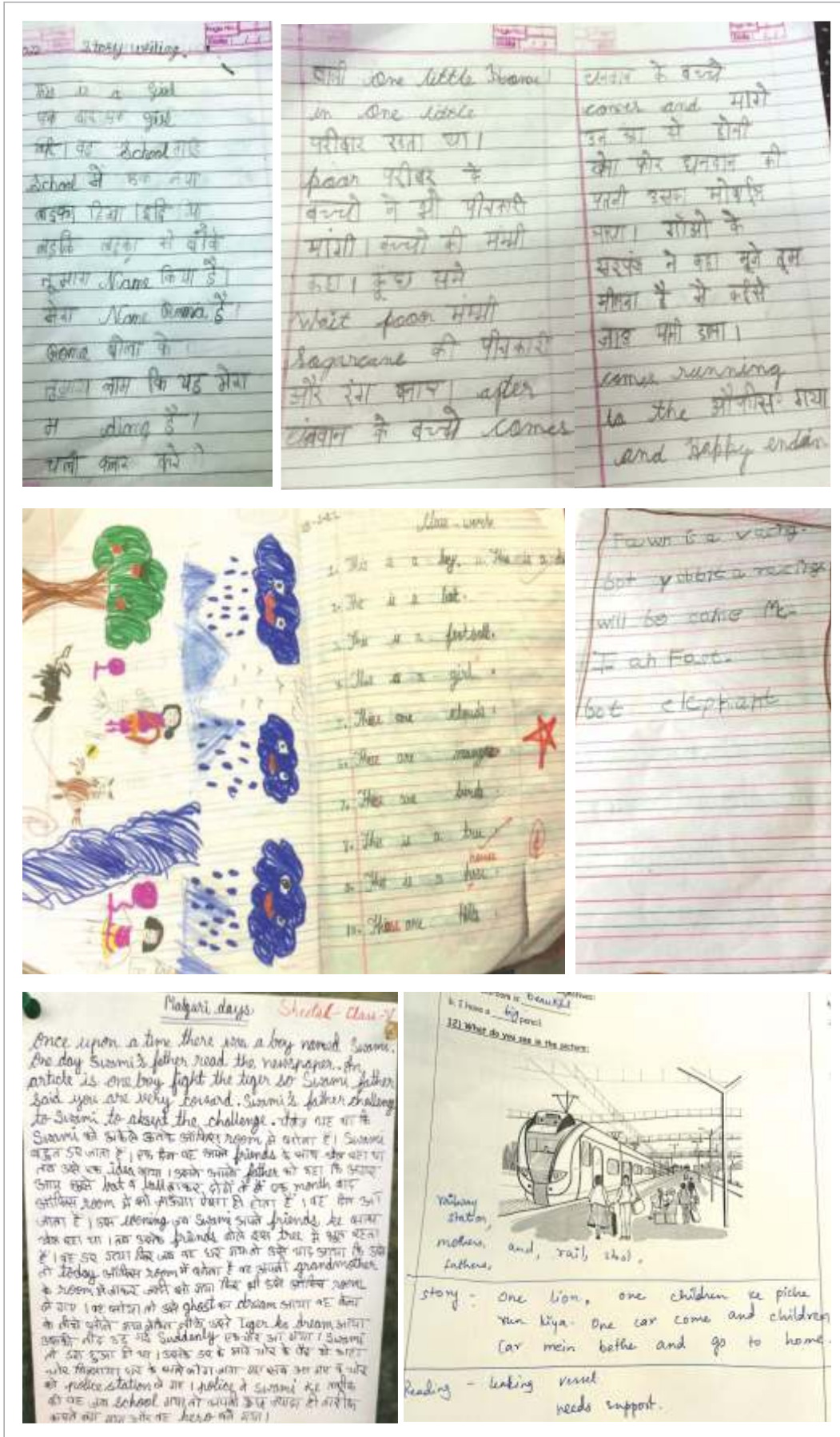


Figure 28 Samples of writings of beginners and developing learners of English

Cursive writing and good handwriting have nothing to do with writing skills.

Many of us in the community of English teachers and general public erroneously believe that learning cursive writing is an absolute necessity, which makes them spend a lot of energy in pushing children to learn cursive shapes of letters. We need to understand that cursive writing used to be promoted earlier because people had to write a lot in their grown-up years with nib pens which would work better in writing continuously without lifting the pen. Writing in cursive would also make it possible to write fast. Moreover, calligraphy and ability to write beautifully had great value in the eyes of people for aesthetic and cultural purposes.

In this age, where people do not have to do much writing with a pen thanks to the computer-based work culture, there is no point in wasting one's energy and time on making children practice cursive and develop good handwriting. The only thing that should matter to the teachers is that children learn to write legibly.

Besides, as teachers, we also need to understand that it is more important to think originally, organise one's thoughts and put them down coherently rather than copying or writing somebody else's thoughts/sentences all through your academic and working life.

Writing for communication/functional purposes

In the beginning of this journey, developing a strong desire in the children to communicate with the subject/object of their admiration and love may be an important step in the desired direction, as it gives them reasons to learn conventional form of writing. So, for instance, when the children are engaged in writing a letter with the help of the teacher to their mother, father, teacher, or friend, the letter can have a lot of drawing and a little text which they choose and write from different sources. Sources of writing can include words/phrases in their mind spelled by the teacher, words/phrases suggested and written by the teacher on the board/in their copy, words/phrases and sentences they pick from songs and stories or textbook lessons they have access to.

- The words/phrases/sentences chosen for this purpose could be, 'Dear ma/..., I miss you, cook some sweet for me, I love you, come home soon, happy birthday, you are the best, buy me a dress/..., don't tell didi, it is a surprise...'
- Besides the above, labelling tasks also come under purposive writing. So, after each drawing session, children should be encouraged to label all that they have drawn.
- Planning a trip/picnic- where to go, what to carry, when to start, how to travel, etc.
- Making a list of the items needed to be bought for a trip, like fruits, food, things to play with, things to do, arrangements to be made, etc.
- Writing to tell people what they know about the universe. The topics could be

anything ranging from the sun, moon and rivers, to why the wind blows, or birds fly, or fish swim, and thousands of such things. Topics can also be issues in the human world, like 'Why does papa shout at us or mummy?', 'Why does mummy/papa beat us/scold us/drink/smoke, etc.?' Since children also have some folk theories about most of the things and phenomenon they experience, they can be asked to talk about them, and the teacher may write the responses on the board in English.

- Playing the game of writing in the air,- where either the teacher or the students use their index finger to trace a letter or word in the air and the rest of them attempt to guess the letter/ word traced. The game will involve writing of some letters or words by the children and teacher with their index finger while the rest of them make guesses and say the letter or word.
- Writing to complain about a friend/papa/ma/teacher, etc.
- Writing what they have read/seen/experienced in their own words- stories/ films, what they did in the summer vacation or during a trip, etc.
- Creating rules for the class or for the grown- ups-ma, papa, teacher, elder siblings, grandparents etc.

Writing for creative purposes

- Writing a poem/story/page in a diary
- Writing a note about a drawing comprising of just a few words/phrases or a few simple sentences.
- My Creating their own big books- with learner learner-created text., with a The story/anecdote can be dictated by the children and written by the teacher on one side of the chart paper, while the children draw the images on the other side about the story.
- Creating a wall poster, like a chart having images and text created by a child or children with the help of the teacher.

Writing for fun

Drawing, scribbling, and writing on the sand, or with colours on a chart paper; arranging pebbles/petals/twigs in the shape of letters and words.

The activities mentioned above are some suggestions and, in every case, the teacher is supposed to put children's thoughts on the board in English. Needless to say, the overall proficiency of the teacher matters a lot in getting the desired results from practicing this approach.

Controlled or guided writing

Controlled or guided writing works well in the classes where children have received a lot of exposure to English and are able to make guesses and use hints to form their own sentences. The following exercises are meant to provide support to learners to start writing in English and thereby develop confidence, which, in turn, makes them feel motivated to write more and learn more. However, here too children require the teacher's support for gaining confidence in writing.

Some Examples:

1. Put below Given below is the morning routine of Ritu, a class 5 student who lives in a village near Udaipur. Try reading about the work she does every morning. Is your morning routine different from hers? Can you make a similar table and write about how you start your day and carry out different tasks?

5:00 a.m.	She gets up.
5:30 a.m.	She wakes her younger brother and sister up.
6:00 a.m.	She helps her mother in milking their three buffaloes.
6:30 a.m.	She has milk and <i>chapatis</i> with her family.
7:00 a.m.	She starts for a study centre with her sister and brother.
7:30 a.m.	She starts her studies with the help of her teacher.
10:30 a.m.	She has her mid-day-meal.
11:00 a.m.	She comes back home.
11:30 a.m.	She goes to the nearby handpump with her elder brother to fetch water.

2. Given below in the box are some words related to certain sports. Categorise them under the sports you know about. For instance, words like 'kick', 'hit', 'corner', and 'penalty kick' are related to football.

kick, volley, hit, service, tackle, return, shot, wicket, racket, corner, dive, foul, game, penalty kick, throw, touch, wrist shot, bounce, catch, bowl, pass, strike, dice, sprint, race, score, draw

3. Read the poem given below. Can you create a similar dialogue poem having people/animals of your choice?

Puppy And I By A.A. Milne

I met a Man as I went walking;
 We got talking, Man and I.
 "Where are you going to, Man?" I said
 (I said to the Man as he went by).
 "Down to the village, to get some bread.
 Will you come with me?" "No, not I."

I met a horse as I went walking;
 We got talking, Horse and I.
 "Where are you going to, Horse, today?"
 (I said to the Horse as he went by).

"Down to the village to get some hay.
Will you come with me?" "No, not I."

I met a Woman as I went walking;
We got talking, Woman and I.
"Where are you going to, Woman, so early?"
(I said to the Woman as she went by).
"Down to the village to get some barley.
Will you come with me?" "No, not I."

I met some Rabbits as I went walking;
We got talking, Rabbits and I.
"Where are you going in your brown fur coats?"
(I said to the Rabbits as they went by).
"Down to the village to get some oats.
Will you come with us?" "No, not I."

I met a Puppy as I went walking;
We got talking, Puppy and I.
"Where are you going this nice fine day?"
(I said to the Puppy as he went by).
"Up to the hills to roll and play."
"I'll come with you, Puppy," said I.

4. Look at the picture below. Can you draw some of the objects seen in the picture in your notebook and write their names?



5. Given below is the beginning of the story of a girl who wanted to become a football coach. Try to complete the story. You can take help from your teacher and write in Hindi/mixed language.

Once upon a time, there was a **girl whose dream was to be football trainer**. The **boys at school used to mock her** because she was a **girl with a boy's dream**. Nobody thought that she would ever become a football trainer...

6. Which game are the children playing in the picture below? Can you write the rules of the game in order to tell somebody how this game is played? The expressions in the brackets below will help you form sentences in English.

(...counts up to 10; ...run to hide themselves; ...looks for them moving quietly; ...maintain silence so that they are not caught;the one who gets caught first has to seek everybody in the next round of the game)



7. Mohit has written the following sentences about his family. Can you use some of his sentences to describe your family? Talk to your teacher about your family using some of Mohit's sentences. Also, write a similar paragraph about yourself.

I am Mohit. I am seven years old. I am in Class IV. I live with my parents.

I have a sister too. Her name is Suguna. She is six years old. She is in Class I. We go to school together.

My father is a farmer. He works on the farm. He grows rice and vegetables. He works very hard.

My mother is a teacher. She teaches small children.

8. Given below is the picture of the bird, Bulbul, which you get to see everywhere in your village. Can you collect some information about it? You can take help from your parents/ friends/ teachers/ internet. Try writing ten sentences about Bulbul in English in the space provided below the picture.



- i) It lives _____.
- ii) It feeds on _____.
- iii) It is found _____.
- iv) It lays eggs _____.
- v) It makes its nest _____.
- vi) It likes _____.
- vii) It fears _____.
- viii) You can make it your friend by _____.
- ix) It is also known as _____.

9. Given below is the description of Jagmal's village. Can you draw some scenes of his village or write about his village in your own words? Also, write a similar piece about your village in English or mixed language (Hindi + English).

I am Jagmal. I live in a village called Chenur. In my village, there are many huts and some houses too. There are mango and peepal trees in the village. Outside the village are the farms and fields. Farmers work with ploughs and tractors.

The village has a school. There are four teachers in my school. They do not live in our village but come from the town nearby. There is a well in the village. There is also a pond. Cows, bulls, buffaloes, horses, donkeys, dogs, and goats drink water from the pond. They sometimes have a bath in it. You can also see many cats in the lanes. They like to drink milk and chase mice.

Some people have TV sets and mobile phones too. I like watching TV in the village hall.

10. Look at the picture below and write six sentences about what you see in the picture in the space provided.



- i) I see a cute li..... in the picture.
 - ii) She is wearing a..... of on her head.
 - iii) She is also wearing a beautiful f.....
 - iv) She is carrying a and a in her hands.
 - v) Her eyes are b....
 - vi) Her small trunk looks c.....
11. Do you recognise the objects in the picture given below? Read their names in English with the help of your teacher and write in your notebook what you call them in your own language. Also try completing the sentences (given below the picture) about how we use them.



- i) We roll chapatis with _____.
- ii) We use the ladle to serve _____.
- iii) We use tongs to cook _____.
- iv) We serve vegetables with _____.
- v) We serve rice with _____.
- vi) We fry poories with _____.
- vii) We grate cucumber with _____.
- viii) We use the juicer for _____.
- ix) We cut vegetables on _____.
- x) We mash potatoes with _____.

12. Your teacher will read and talk about a poem called 'Raindrops' with you (from the NCERT textbook). Can you draw some of the objects mentioned in the poem and write their names?

A big wind is blowing.
Look the leaves are flying!
The wind can blow the trees down.
My house is old.
Will it come down?

Or

- Read the poem given above and write your own poem or change words in the given poem to express how the strong wind makes you feel.

A big wind is blowing.
Look the clouds are floating!
The wind can blow them away from my land.
My fields need rain.
Will it come back?



A Note on Grammar Teaching

Traditionally, English was taught using the grammar translation method, and it has been in practice in a majority of the schools in the rural set up even today. For decades, English has been taught using the grammar translation method. While many English teachers have moved to using newer methods, many government schools (especially in the rural areas) continue teaching using the grammar translation method. There is a belief among teachers that learning of grammar and its rules would result in better language production among learners. It is mentioned in the position paper on English language teaching, 'Grammar is not a route for developing primary or usable knowledge of language, but it can serve as a tool for increasing the language repertoire and for understanding the construction of text rhetoric and argumentation'.

When we focus too much on grammar in the early grades, it leads to many issues with the learning: it makes the learning of language very technical, and excessive focus on the accuracy makes the child focus more on producing the right spelling, structure, etc. than produce English in their own words. In doing so, she doesn't take liberty to produce the target language, which affects her language learning. There is a term called 'functional grammar' in the present textbooks of English language, which advocates the teaching of grammar in a functional way. The focus is on usage rather than rules of the language. The child is exposed to the target language in meaningful and contextual language use, which helps the child learn the language and develop an intuitive sense of language rules. For example, the native speakers of language have functional understanding of its grammar even though they may not be able to verbalise it. Here, the work is done with the language and not on the grammar of her home language. We can say that the rich exposure of her home language helps the child develop such functional understanding.

We understand that such rich exposure of English language is not available to the children in the rural set up. It affects the learners' ability to develop such functionality of English language and it leads us to have some level of drilling of the structure in the classroom, which should be done in a meaningful manner. Grammar learning takes place when the learners work with the language, and, in doing so, they can learn the function first and deduce the grammatical rules at a later stage.

Given below here is an effort to help us understand how to work with grammar while using the English textbook to develop grammar sense in the students; a chapter from the NCERT book has been selected.

Lesson plan (*The Naughty Boy* by John Keats (NCERT, Class 4, Unit 10))

Here is the poem:

There was a naughty boy,
And a naughty boy was he.
He ran away to Scotland,
The people there to see --
Then he found

That the ground
 Was as hard,
 That a yard
 Was as long
 That a song
 Was as merry,
 That a cherry
 Was as red,
 That lead
 Was as weighty,
 That fourscore
 Was as eighty,
 That a door was as wooden
 As in England –
 So he stood in his shoes
 And he wondered,
 He wondered,
 He stood in his shoes,
 And he wondered.

Along with the other objectives, the unit focuses on describing words, i.e., describing words (adjectives). Some model steps that can be followed to develop the learners' concept of adjectives are:

Step 1: Let us read the poem together and try to understand it. Can we think of giving a name to the naughty boy? Why this name? Let us list out the things/objects that the naughty boy had seen in Scotland.

Or

I have listed a few objects on the board. Let us read them together and identify the objects the boy had seen in Scotland.

ball, door, bird, song, box, lead,
 apple, banana, cherry, man,
 school, yard, bat, dog, bell.

The teacher can ask the students about the children's' views on the highlighted words. For example, “Door – Have you seen it? How is it?” The response might be wooden, heavy, colourful, big, solid, etc. The teacher would form sentences using the responses, like “The door is wooden.”, “The door is heavy.”, “It is a big door. It is a colourful door.” The same exercise can be done with the local songs the children know and sing. Getting their responses on the songs, which can include answers like 'long song', 'musical song', 'Marwadi song', 'sad song', etc. ” The teacher will form sentences with the help of the students:

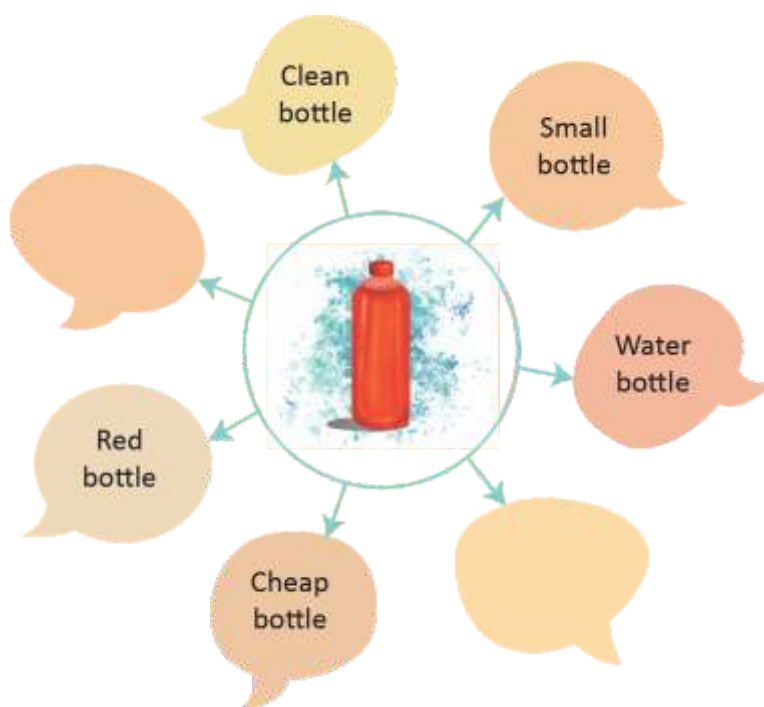
“It is a long song.”,
 “It is a musical song.”, and
 “It is a sad song.”

Step 2: Let us think that the naughty boy will come to your village next week. What will you show him in your village? Let us list ten things that you will show him. The teacher and students together list ten things to show to the naughty boy. The teacher will talk about those ten things and lead the group to share a few describing words related to those ten things. The things would be These could include things such as be – a well, the ground, buffalos, *bBesan gGatta*, etc. The teacher will talk with the students and will lead them to identify describing words, like 'old', 'big', 'round', 'small' (well), 'clean', 'big', 'small' (ground), 'healthy', and 'tasty' (*Bbesan Ggatta*).

The teacher then writes the full sentences on the board.

1. It is an old well.
2. It is a big/small/dip well.
3. It is a round/square/haunted well.
4. This is a clean/dirty well.

Step 3: Describing an object: Ask the children to say a word about the bottle shown in the picture and the teacher will write down the response of the children in the bubbles.



After this, the teacher and the students together form sentences using the describing words for 'bottle'.

1. It is a red bottle.
2. This is a water bottle.
3. It is a clean bottle.

4. It is a costly bottle.
5. The bottle is small.

Step 4: Now read the poem again and identify objects and their describing words, like 'naughty boy', 'hard ground', 'long yard', etc.

Step 5: Read the following paragraph and identify objects and their describing words.

It was Mona's ninth birthday. She wanted to enjoy it with her friends. They all went to the village mela (fair). The fair was very big and had many rides, food stalls, magic stalls, etc. They enjoyed rides, and tasty food. Mona also sang a nice song. She has a sweet voice. She played a local game named sSitoliya with her friends. They all enjoyed this lovely day.

Step 6: Show us a thing from your school bag and use a describing word for that thing or object.

The object selected can be as simple as notebooks, books, pen, pencils, sketch pens, water bottle, ruler, eraser, or sharpener. The students can respond with describing words, such as 'big', 'clean', 'hardbound', 'colourful', 'blank', 'covered', 'story', 'subject', 'red', 'blue', 'black', 'small', 'big', 'new', 'old', 'plastic', and 'costly'.

Now, when we look at the lesson plan, we see that grammar teaching is still being taught, without having the students learn the rules. being done. It has been a practice among our schools that the grammar is In many schools across the country, grammar is still taught through rules, where the rules related to grammar item is explained to the children, and the students are expected to learn and produce sentences using that grammar item. On the other hand, we have a practice that focuses more on usage than rules. Here, the focus is that the children should learn to use the grammar item/s and in doing so, they would form their rules based on the practice.

As the grammar teaching process becomes more meaningful and the learners are exposed to wholesome language rather than just fragments, the language learning process also becomes easier and more effective for the learners. Apart from this, the process is becoming more meaningful and the children get exposure of wholesome language rather than just fragments, which also contributes to the process of language learning.



A note on the connection between oral language (oracy) and reading and writing (literacy)

There is a tendency to treat reading, writing, listening, and speaking as separate skills. As a result, we design activities specifically for one or two of these skills at a time, without considering how they are related to each other. The belief is that children first listen, then they talk, read, and finally write. Unless someone speaks, the child cannot listen. If the child does not listen, he cannot speak... and so on. When it comes to reading and writing, the common perception is that while reading, one *consumes* the content whereas while writing, one *produces* it. Such an understanding does not clarify the inter-relationship of these so-called four skills of language at a deeper level.

From oral to written language

We have already discussed at the beginning of this chapter how all language skills develop harmoniously and not sequentially. Language familiarity is not just about developing oral skills, the connection between oral

and written language makes language a 'cohesive whole'. If we look at it from a nuanced perspective, a child cannot read or write an unfamiliar language. She may rapidly decode sound-letter combinations or copy certain symbols in beautiful handwriting but may make no sense or meaning of the entire process. One thing is certain, she is not reading or writing at all! This is where the role of oral familiarity with the language comes in.

It is important to base reading and writing in oral work, as one can only read and write in a familiar language.

When a child knows a language, she knows that the spoken sounds have some meaning when they occur in various combinations. She may not think about this very consciously, but she knows how to use language orally for various purposes. Oral familiarity is naturally built in the case of home language(s) whereas reading and writing require more specific instruction. This changes in the case of English, as deliberate efforts are made in the classroom even in the case of listening and speaking. This is also the point where children develop an awareness of sounds (phonological awareness).

It, therefore, becomes important to form the basis of reading and writing in oral work, like rhymes and songs, poems, stories, etc. because one can only read and write in a familiar language and the more one reads and writes, the better they learn the language. But these rhymes and songs, poems and stories cannot be without talk and conversation, as both are essential for making sense of what is said and how it connects to our lives. Without discussion and dialogue, there is a risk of merely rote memorizing the language content. This is especially true in our field contexts where English is not present in the environment in a wholesome way.

When it comes to reading and writing, we know that a reader is not a *passive recipient* of what she gets to read but an *active participant* in the process of making meaning of a written piece. She is in continuous dialogue with the writer and thereby, what comes out is a shared, 'negotiated' meaning. This notion makes the

reader a co-producer or creator of the written piece. Thus, both writing and reading are involved in the creation/production of the text/meaning.

Now, in order to read and write, the child must first understand that what is spoken (oral language) can also be written using some commonly known strokes or designs called letters (graphemes). This connection can only be built if the teacher creates multiple opportunities for children to engage with printed material. We see this in the form of read-aloud and shared reading activities where the teacher makes deliberate attempts to link what is spoken to what is written using various techniques, like finger-pointing. The written text chosen for such activities is supposed to be familiar to the children and related to their lives and experiences. The teacher is also supposed to have detailed talk or conversations about what is written in order to prepare the children for reading. Over time, children come to know that we write not only what we say or talk about but also what we think, observe and imagine. The child sees that the written symbols hold some meaning. The circle of meaning and the connection between oral and written language is complete for the growing child when she finds the written words being brought into the oral form through loud reading and discussions on them.

Over time, children come to know that we write not only what we say or talk about but also what we think, observe and imagine.



Figure 29 An example of a teacher writing down conversations with children in English

The role of the teacher in such a setting becomes even more important. Initially, she needs to focus on important precursors to reading and writing script, like reading pictures, drawing, and scribbling. Slowly, she needs to expose children to print, as they may have almost no such exposure at home. She has the responsibility of

writing down what is used or discussed orally (through rhyme and song charts, story charts, classroom labels, alphabet and word lists, conversations and talks by students, etc.). There are many more illustrations in this chapter. The teacher also needs to expose children to print other than the prescribed textbooks, such as storybooks. This print is not to be merely stuck on the walls or written on the blackboard but must be used for continuous interaction with students for word and letter identification and for observing spellings.



Figure 30 A rich and vibrant library where children engage with storybooks and other material for extensive reading

Another important point to note for our field contexts is to have explicit teaching of sound-letter correspondence (phonics). We cannot risk the assumption that children will learn to magically read and write simply through talk and conversation. This has been one of our biggest learnings through many years of field experience and is also backed by research which has shown that literacy programs with phonics instruction work better than literacy programs with no phonics instruction. Phonics instruction explicitly builds familiarity with sounds and their corresponding letters. This can only be done after students have built the association that what is spoken can be written, and what is written can be read. However, the term 'phonics instruction' is often seen in a negative light and makes one believe that it favours mechanical drilling of sounds and letters in isolation. Having explicit instruction does not necessarily mean that. In fact, a comprehensive approach to language teaching makes it inevitable that sounds and letters are taught in meaningful and contextual ways, just as oral abilities are developed. Let us delve deeper to see how phonics instruction can be carried out meaningfully and contextually within a comprehensive literacy framework.



Figure 31 Children sorting word cards based on their initial consonant clusters

Children's awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) improves when they write what they have been reading – by making guesses about the possible spellings of the words they have already read based on their awareness of sound-letter correspondence (phonics). At an advanced level, the practice of writing helps them analyse the text they read while good reading habits familiarize them with a variety of styles and turn them into good writers. Besides, immersing children into different genres of writing and presenting them with good models of writing, help them write coherently and cohesively. Plus, giving children a choice in reading and writing, motivates them immensely and improves their thinking and reasoning abilities as well.

Immersing children into different genres of writing and presenting them with good models of writing, help them write coherently and cohesively.

Development of reading and writing is a lifelong process and one keeps on improving it as they engage with newer and different kinds of texts. No wonder, the current understanding in this area insists on preparing the ground for learners to become life-long readers, thinkers and writers which goes a long way in attaining the larger goals of literacy - of helping people become autonomous and rational beings. Teachers, therefore, must focus on developing oral, reading and writing abilities simultaneously in a classroom, not one after the other. However, they should be aware that this entails designing classroom practices around these and having a host of age- and context-appropriate activities to make sure that children stay engaged and are able to attain the desired learning outcomes.

2.2 Desired Classroom Practices for Early Language Teaching

As discussed earlier, the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities happen simultaneously. In this section, we are listing down desired classroom practices (CP) that help students develop these abilities. Our work with teachers should be based on these practices.

2.2.1 CP1. Talk and conversation

Why is talk important in classrooms?

Simply put, 'talk' is when learners are given the freedom to express themselves orally. Talking not only makes any language classroom more comfortable for learners but also builds fluency and polishes oral expression by providing opportunities to think and articulate thoughts. Talk also paves the way for reading and writing as learners apply their understanding of the structure and conventions of oral language to the sentence patterns and possible meanings of written texts. 'Teacher talk' provides contextual listening opportunities and scope for conversation, even if the learners initially respond using gestures/actions, their home language(s), or mixed language (home language with English). In other words, the major objective of talk in initial years is not to force language production in English but to gently nudge the learner towards greater use of English with the support of home language(s). Talk is, therefore, an important resource for the classroom.

Space for this kind of free talk may be created in the English classroom to develop vocabulary, organize and express ideas and develop language fluency.

Space for this kind of free talk may be created in the English classroom to develop vocabulary, organize and express ideas and develop language fluency. The teacher can ask questions to prompt children to talk by using contexts which are familiar and interesting.

Krishna Kumar in 'Child's Language and the Teacher' (1986) lists several functions of child's talk, for example, to recall an earlier experience, to exchange and share observations, to challenge and argue about each other's observations, and to imagine their own feelings in an imaginary situation. He explains how these functions of talk lead to the development of 'intellectual skills' like analysis and reasoning. Kumar specifically lists five kinds of opportunities which the teacher can create in the classroom to encourage children to talk:

1. Opportunities to talk about oneself
2. Opportunities to talk about objects and experiences at school
3. Talking about pictures
4. Listening to stories and talking about them
5. Acting it out

We will try to illustrate a few of these at the end of this section.



Essential reading

Talk by Krishna Kumar in *Child's Language and the Teacher* (1986)



Figure 33 Patience is key! Give children time to share what they think and feel.



In the light of the earlier discussion, here is a detailed list of practices around talk and conversation that we should encourage the teacher to do.

In an effective classroom, the teacher:

- 1.1. Has wholesome conversations with children on a daily basis on topics related to their daily life experiences, contexts, interests, age, etc. using a mix of English and the children's home language(s).
- 1.2. Makes planned efforts to talk using comprehensible input in order to familiarize children with the vocabulary and sentence structures of English without resorting to translation.
- 1.3. Involves all children in talking about themselves and their surroundings using some English, with the support of their home language(s).
- 1.4. Asks probing questions to stimulate thinking during conversations with children, without worrying about language production.
- 1.5. Encourages children to respond to probing questions in their home language(s) (in the initial months).
- 1.6. Gives children time to produce English and is patient when they make errors or mistakes.
- 1.7. Lets the children take the support of their home language(s) while using English.
- 1.8. Uses TLMs such as pictures and objects to further aid comprehension.
- 1.9. Talks animatedly with as many actions and expression possible.
- 1.10. Increases her use of English outside the English classroom, for example, in the morning assembly and during the midday meal, using diverse inputs, such as instructions and small talk.
- 1.11. Uses conversations for modelled writing (and its shared reading) to build awareness of print and to practice reading, in general.
- 1.12. Creates specific opportunities for children to respond to conversations through scribbles and drawings.
- 1.13. Uses conversations to practice awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) through diverse tasks.
- 1.14. Uses talk and conversations as a tool for oral assessment, for example, by asking comprehension and inferential questions.
- 1.15. Tracks children's use of words/expressions in English.
- 1.16. Uses feedback from assessment to develop further plans for talk and conversations.

Illustrative activities for talk and conversation

1 Illustrative activity 1: Talking to children about their daily lives

Associated Learning Outcomes

- Talks about self/situations/pictures in English/bilingually
- Can draw a picture with the help of oral instructions

Children love to talk about their daily lives in painful detail, sometimes even to the point of tiring their family and teachers! They talk about what they ate, what they wore, whom they met, what games they played, what they were and were not allowed to do, what they feel like doing, etc. They even talk about questions which come to their mind or whatever they are thinking about – irrespective of



Figure 34 Role-play using face masks widen opportunities to converse

whether they want you to respond or simply listen to what they have to say. Talk is often in the form of a conversation, though this may not always be so. Nevertheless, children talk and generally enjoy it when we talk along with them! It takes immense linguistic skills to talk – one has thoughts and they need some organization or structure before being voiced aloud. One needs to choose the right words and forms of expression to communicate what is desired.

Let us look at one such example of talk about daily lives in a classroom where the teacher is trying to use and introduce a few English words to talk to her students about their favourite food:

- “ Teacher: Do you like to eat fish? (does the action of 'eating' and 'fish')
- Students: Yes!!! (jump up and down and nod their heads in excitement)
- Teacher: Hafte mein kitni baar do you eat fish? How often? (holds up her right hand to indicate she is asking a question)
- Sonu: Ek din... Kabhi kabhi do din! (holds up two fingers)
- Teacher: Accha! Okay! One or two days?
- Sonu: Yes, Ma'am! One or two days. (nods)
- Banshi: Daily! (excitedly)
- Teacher: Arrey waah! Very lucky!
- Other students: Ma'am ye jhooth bol raha hai! Ye toh fish khata hi nahi! (all children, including Sonu and Banshi laugh)
- Teacher: Okay! Okay! So, you tell me (points to a student with a curious expression), kaunsi fish do you like to eat?
- Malavika: Salangi. I love salangi!
- Other students: Mmmmmmm!!!! Salangi! Ma'am! Please! Salangi!

”

The teacher continues the conversation by talking about the taste of salangi and how it is cooked. As the children explain the process, she introduces focuses on a few keywords in English, like oil and fry. She even uses words from the local language, like kadhai. As the conversation progresses, the teacher keeps noting down the keywords in English on the blackboard and points at them whenever the words are used. She involves other children who do not eat fish and asks them questions about what they like to eat. Jitandra does not eat fish, but he has gone fishing with his friends. She encourages him to talk about his experience of fishing. And the conversation continues. In the last 15 minutes of the class, the teacher asks everyone to draw a picture where they are cooking their favourite dish or fishing or shopping for ingredients in the market. The children have full freedom to choose what they wish to draw from the day's discussion. In the next class, the teacher looks at the drawings and talks more about what everyone has drawn.

2 Illustrative activity 2: Talking about pictures

Associated Learning Outcomes

- Names familiar objects seen in pictures
- Talks about self/situations/pictures in English/bilingually
- Associates words with pictures
- Carries out simple instructions such as 'Shut the door', 'Bring me the book', etc.
- Takes interest in performing in events such as role play/skit in English

It is not just words we read, but also pictures. You must have heard and even experienced for yourself how a picture can speak more than a thousand words! This is because as humans we have immense potential to see stories in pictures; we wish to build relations and form connections even where none exist! However, loving pictures is not just the prerogative of adults. Children love pictures too, especially pictures of interesting themes with vivid use of colour. Pictures without any accompanying text (or very little text) are, therefore, excellent resources to initiate talk with children. The kind of pictures we choose depends on what we wish to achieve. If the focus is on vocabulary building, we must keep the picture simple, clear and unambiguous so that children can see each part/object in the picture clearly and can



Figure 35 Vivid and detailed scenes with lots of action are excellent for initiating talk

name the objects in the picture and also talk about each object in three to four sentences. Pictures of characters from a story, particularly of two characters interacting with each other are good settings for practising conversations, making dialogue, predicting the characters, role-playing, etc. However, more complex pictures, like compact scenes of the marketplace, town-square, and bus-stop can be used to talk about a myriad of topics ranging from describing the scene, inferring what may have happened before the scene, what may happen after the scene, etc.

Let us look at one example of how a teacher initiates talk using pictures in the classroom.

We suggest that the teacher should initially use relatively simple pictures with one or two characters and gradually move to pictures with more characters and ideas.

The teacher shows the given picture of a village scene which she has printed on a large A3 sheet. She had to go out of her way to find the picture online and get it printed from the district headquarters, but she did it because the response she gets from her learners when she takes such pictures to her classroom is amazing. It makes the whole task worth it!



Figure 36 A village scene used for picture reading by the teacher

The teacher first asks her class to sit in a circle. She then places the picture in the centre of the circle and lets her learners absorb every detail of the picture for 5-10 minutes. She instructs them as follows using a mix of Hindi and local language, telling them that they should observe first after which they will get time to talk:



Look at the picture. Move your eyes from left to right, top to bottom. Look all over! Where do you think this scene is from? Does it look familiar? Look at the people. What are they wearing? Look at the different natural objects you see. What are the different colours you see? Can you spot some

animals? Imagine yourself in the picture. What would you be doing? Have you been to a place like this before? How does this picture make you feel?



By now, everyone has crowded around the picture. Some learners have already started talking; they can hardly control themselves! The teacher realizes that it is time to talk about the picture. She asks everyone to share whatever is on their mind. The learners all say that it is a scene of a village. It looks very similar to their village. Some learners point out tiny details like the scarecrow (bijuka) in the field and tyre on the roof of a house. The teacher prompts them to use English words they already know. She refreshes their memory by playing the 'locating game' –



Can you see the little boy and girl? Can you point out the handpump?



The learners now try to use more English words they know like house, tree, road, grass, handpump, field, boy, girl. The teacher uses these words to make short sentences in English – The girl and boy are running. Who is cutting grass? (she imitates a cutting action) She tries to write all the responses on the blackboard and points them out to read them again.

The teacher once again asks the inferential question she had asked at the very beginning –



How does the picture make you feel?

The learners say words like nice, good, and happy. They once again switch to a smattering of their local language (they say how this village is very similar to their own village). But the teacher is happy. In complete English, she says – When I see the picture, I feel very happy and joyful. There are so many beautiful colours. The village looks very noisy! I want to go to this village!



The teacher then asks everyone to think about their own village and tell her about things, people, or places they see. She makes a list on the blackboard – school, old well, dogs, peepal trees, jamun trees, pond, pigs, cows and buffaloes, shops (dukaan), panwala, etc.

In the next English class, the teacher groups her students (4 groups of 4-5 students) and asks them to create a story about the girl and boy in the picture. She gives them sufficient time to do so. Initially, she had planned 15 minutes. But her students asked for more time because of which she had to give the whole period for this activity. But she is willing to give more time because she can decide what works best for her classroom.

A day later, the students are ready to share their stories with the rest of the class.

The class in question is already used to such picture reading activities. Earlier, the teacher had to repeatedly prompt them with lots of questions. Her students found it easy to answer factual questions, like "what is the colour of the tree?" But found it difficult to answer more inferential questions, like "what would you do if you were in the picture?" However, the learners are

now very open and willing to talk about the picture. They are able to relate the picture to their own lives and can see themselves in the pictures too. They have reached this stage after a lot of hard work by their teacher. The teacher initially focused on small pictures but realized that her students thoroughly enjoy large scenes with a lot of detail. Soon, the teacher plans to introduce picture stories with more characters.



Figure 37 Collaborative reading helps children with mixed reading abilities



Here are some important points a teacher must keep in mind while talking about pictures:

1. Pictures should be selected carefully keeping in mind the context, age, experience, interest, and previous work done with learners. The objective of talking about the picture should also be clear – Do you wish learners to learn new vocabulary? Make sentences? Draw and colour? Talk about their own lives? Label the picture?
2. Give sufficient time for learners to observe the picture and 'absorb' it. During this time, the teacher can ask a broad set of questions to direct students' attention to all the things that can be observed in the picture. The need to ask these questions may diminish over time when learners become better at observing all kinds of details.
3. A set of simple, factual questions or yes/no questions are good to prepare learners for talking about pictures. These also form the basis of their observation in subsequent picture reading activities.
4. More complex and inferential questions can be added depending on the response from learners. It is important to help them connect the picture with their lives or 'find themselves' in the pictures too.
5. Choose English words and phrases to use while asking questions with great care. This should be done by the teacher while planning for the session.
6. Ideally, write all the key words on the blackboard (mainly English, some can be from the local language, like the word for 'scarecrow')
7. All learners should get time to share what they see, think, and feel with the rest of the class. The teacher should also talk about what she sees in the picture to make her learners more comfortable.
8. When learners are ready, they can be paired/grouped and asked to prepare short role-plays, skits, or descriptions of pictures. But there should be no rush to do so.



Questions for the reader

1. Can you think of some more important points to keep in mind while working with pictures?
2. The teacher went out of her way to get such a picture to the classroom. Do you know teachers who have done something similar?
3. How can you motivate more teachers to use such TLMs (Teaching Learning Material) in their classrooms?

3 Illustrative activity 3 : Talking about real objects

Associated Learning Outcomes

- Talks about self/situations/pictures in English/bilingually
- Carries out simple instructions such as 'Shut the door', 'Bring me the book', etc.

Talking about tangible, real objects is one of the best ways to engage children as they initially understand the world in more concrete forms using their senses of touch, sight, and smell. This talk may happen in simple English sentences or mixed languages. The teacher can ask questions to prompt children to identify properties of different objects, like size, shape, colour, use, etc., which enrich vocabulary in context. Guessing games where objects are described by the teacher and children have to guess the object from their surroundings encourages children to decipher clues from spoken



Figure 38 Concrete materials provide multisensorial experiences essential for development

language. However, talking about real objects should not be limited to physical descriptions alone. Krishna Kumar (1986) states how exploring objects in the school and the neighbourhood provide material for 'extensive investigation and discussion'.

Let us see how one teacher encourages free talk in her classroom by asking her students to bring their favourite objects to school.

In her previous class, the teacher had asked her students bring with them from home an object that is very dear to them. Only four students have brought their favourite objects. Interestingly, these are all objects which are used to play games. The teacher decides to go ahead with the activity, hoping that everyone has some fun and feels motivated to bring their favourite objects the next day.

The teacher calls the four students with their objects forward and asks them to face the class and show what they have brought. There is already a titter of excitement in the class.



Jigar: Mere paas ball hai! Papa ne birthday gift diya. (raises his hand in the air and shows his ball)

Teacher: Arrey waah! What a bright green ball!

Jigar: Ma'am, my favourite ball.

Students: Ma'am! Favourite ball kaise! Iske paas ek hi ball hai! (everyone laughs, including Jigar)

Teacher: Throw! (raises both hands and gestures towards Jigar; he throws the ball and she misses it; all the children scramble to get the ball and give it to the teacher)

Teacher: Thank you! This is a very nice ball. Bouncy! (bounces the ball on the floor and gives it back to Jigar) Rinku, tumhare paas kya hai?

What have you got?

Rinku: Ma'am, truck. Mele se liya! Mama ne kharidia (clings to the truck and does not show it).

Teacher: You got it from the mela! Show! Show your truck to everyone! (Rinku shyly shows her truck).

Students: Ma'am, mast truck hai!

Teacher: Very good! Also it is

Students: (try to copy the teacher) Beautiful! Good! Very pretty! Nice! Excellent! Shabaash!

Teacher: Devilal! You have also got a ball!

Devilal: Ma'am, big ball! Jigar ki ball chotti hai.

Teacher: Yes, Jigar has a small ball. You have a big ball. But both balls are green in colour!

Devilal: Yes Ma'am! Big, green ball! Jigar small ball. (Jigar starts

bouncing his ball on the floor and looks at Devilal from the corner of his eye.)

Jigar: Par meri ball teri ball se zyada fast hai! (Both boys throw their balls and try to catch them.)

Teacher: Okay! Okay! English period ke baad ball se khelenge! We will go out. Ab dekhte hain Kamlesh kya laya hai. Show! Kamlesh. What have you got? (Kamlesh is empty-handed, he puts his hand in his right pocket and takes out some pebbles.)

Kamlesh: Ye patthar hain. Isse gatte khelte hain. Maine jeete.

Teacher: Kya baat hai! Kaise khelte hain?

Kamlesh: Break mein khelenge. Main aapko sikhaunga.

Teacher: Okay! Teach me. Aur inn pattharon ko English mein pebbles ya stones bolte hain. (Writes these two words on the blackboard, points to them and repeats them aloud, and draws a pile of stones underneath.)

Students: Ma'am, ball aur doll aur gatte khelte hain...!

Teacher: Theek hai. Abhi khelte hain. Pehle tell me, ye tum sabke favourite objects kyu hain? (And the conversation continues...)



The teacher then encourages other students to ask more questions about the different objects. She asks her students to describe the colour, shape, size, and texture of the objects and asks the rest of the students to name other objects which feel similar in touch. She writes these words on the blackboard and adds more English words, for example, hard, soft, pointy, bouncy, and round. The teacher then asks the students how these different objects make them feel. During the talk, she ensures that learners do not interrupt each other, listen to others patiently, and wait for their turn to speak. During the break, after everyone has had their midday meal, she notices that her students are playing some game with Rinku's truck. A few students are playing catch with the ball. Kamlesh is playing gatte with Devilal. Tomorrow, she hopes that more children bring their favourite objects!

2.2.2 CP 2. Introduction of rhymes, songs and poems

Importance of rhymes and conversation songs in a classroom

Rhymes and songs are some of the most basic requirements in the early language classroom where students are given oral inputs in the English language. Rhymes with appropriate actions enable students to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words and structures without resorting to translation. Rhymes and songs should initially be short and rhythmic; they can become progressively lengthier. Very often, we hear rhymes which use foreign names or unfamiliar settings used in the classrooms. It is important to contextualize these before use or create rhymes and songs of our own (it is not as difficult as it seems!). Concrete actions and names of objects can be used for maximizing the use of actions and expression. Slowly, students can be encouraged to extend the rhyme or song (by adding more lines or stanzas using similar structures). This develops creative expression. Use of repeated

structures will not only help students take interest and memorize a rhyme or song easily but will also encourage them to sing along, thereby contributing to fluency and initiating the process of language production. Rhymes and songs also provide excellent opportunities for developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness).

Note: For more language activities apart from rhymes and songs which use motor movements and physical actions, refer to the section on 'Total Physical Response' (CP4).

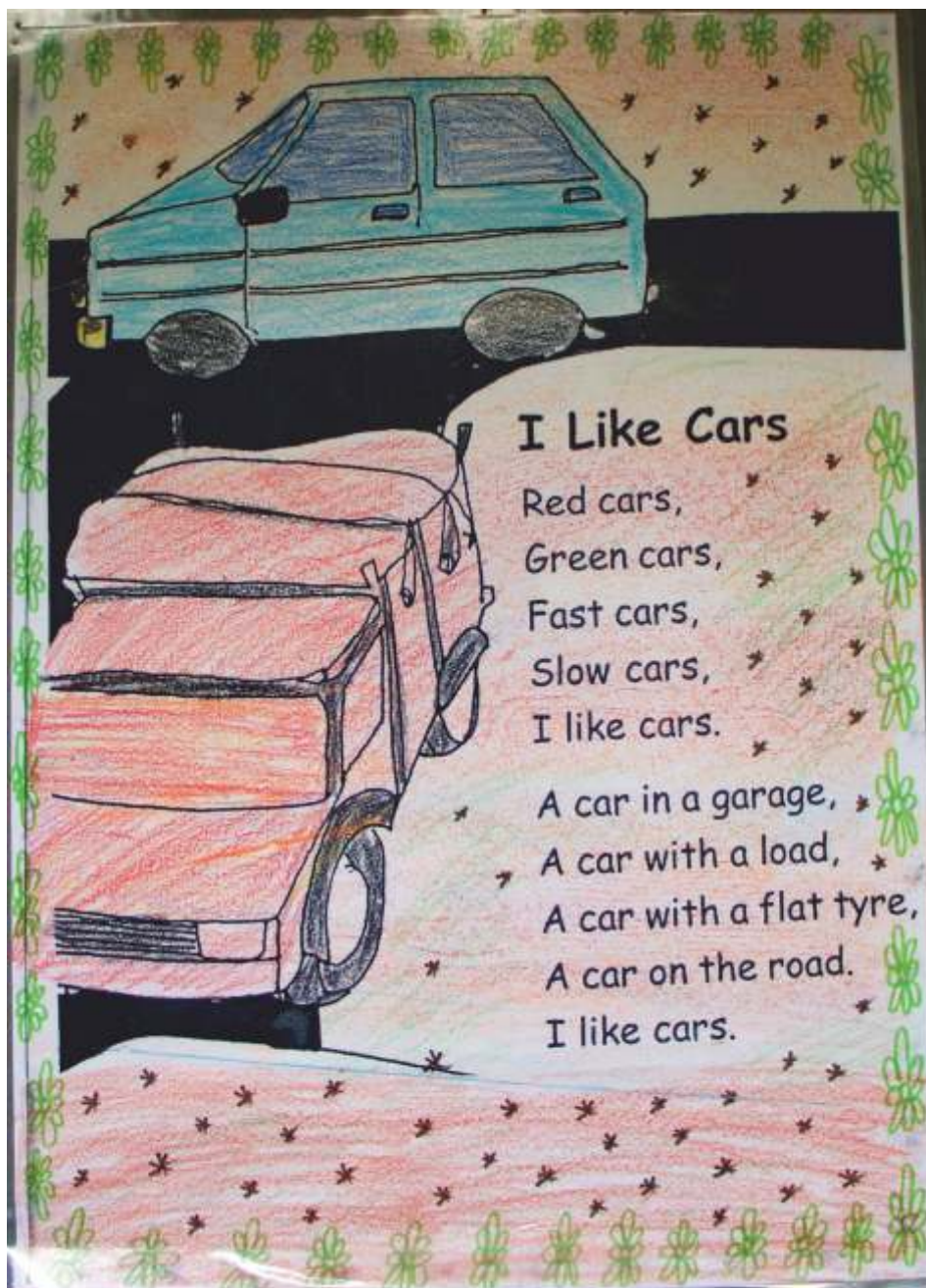


Figure 39 Children take great joy in singing songs - not just in English!



List of desired teaching sub-practices for the introduction of rhymes, songs, and poems.

In an effective classroom, the teacher:

- 2.1. Provides wholesome exposure to the English language through rhymes, songs, and poems.
- 2.2. Uses actions and expressions as much as possible while reciting/singing, for example, raises and lowers her volume, speeds up or slows down her pace, involves a lot of body movement, and encourages children to do the same.
- 2.3. Connects the rhymes, songs, and poems to the lives of children through wholesome conversations.
- 2.4. Uses rhymes, songs, and poems to contextually build the vocabulary of children.
- 2.5. Writes down the rhymes, songs, and poems on chart papers or the blackboard to build awareness of print and practice reading, in general.
- 2.6. Uses rhymes, songs, and poems to practice awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) through diverse tasks.
- 2.7. Introduces new rhymes, songs, and poems (apart from those prescribed in the textbook) which connect to the daily life experiences, contexts, interests, age, etc. of children.
- 2.8. Creates specific opportunities for children to respond to rhymes, songs, and poems through scribbles and drawings.
- 2.9. Uses rhymes, songs, and poems as the basis for writing – initially letting children respond through scribbling and drawing then, progressing to writing a few words or sentences through shared, guided, and independent writing tasks.
- 2.10. Creates multiple opportunities to assess the pseudo-production of English by children. For example, Are children able to recite the rhyme with actions and expression? Are children able to use key words/expressions in English?
- 2.11. Checks oral comprehension of rhymes, songs, and poems by asking a mix of comprehension and inferential questions.
- 2.12. Creates multiple opportunities to assess reading (from identifying words to independent reading) using the printed forms of rhymes, songs, and poems.
- 2.13. Assesses the written responses to rhymes, songs, and poems through planned written assignments (from drawing and scribbling to independent writing).
- 2.14. Uses feedback from assessment to develop further plans for working on rhymes, songs, and poems.

Illustrative activities for introduction of rhymes, songs and poems

1 Illustrative activity 1: Conversation songs

Songs with two or more people as characters have immense scope for being sung in the form of a 'conversation' which is a good setting for meaningful practice of English with a partner. They also develop fluency and contribute to overall comprehension. Let us look at two English teachers trying to use English songs to create some situational fun in their classrooms!

Classroom 1

In the first classroom, the teacher has a very rhythmic English song³ about chai/coffee vendors (chaiwallah) and a train journey. The teacher had set the context many classes ago by starting with picture reading, where she used the picture of a busy railway station and enabled her students to talk about the hustle-bustle of the platform with its different vendors (chaiwallahs, coolie/porters, shopkeepers), railway workers, and passengers. She also encouraged her students to talk about the railway station closest to their village, if they had visited it or knew someone who had. For the others, she asked them to imagine the railway station platform based on the picture and then share their thoughts with others. Subsequently, she had divided her students into four groups and asked them to prepare a noisy role-play by taking various roles of people seen at railway platforms. In totality, the teacher had devoted one period for talking about the picture, one period for preparing the role-plays, and one period for presenting the role-plays.

Today, her students are finally ready to sing this song! The teacher first sings the whole song in one go. She points out to the song chart pasted on the wall as she sings along. Her students listen. They can't wait to join in because it is a very energetic and fun song! The teacher then sings the song once again but this time, she asks her students to become the chaiwallahs! The students can barely contain their excitement! Perhaps in the next English period, her students will become comfortable enough to sing the whole song themselves! She can divide them into two groups and have them take turns to become chaiwallahs!



Train Song – Chai-chai! Coffee-coffee!

Chai, chai! Coffee, coffee! (2 times slowly, 4 times super-fast!)
The train at the station, ready to go; Signal's green, the whistle blows (2)
We're on our way, chugging away
Ta-dak, ta-dak...
Chai, chai! Coffee, coffee! (2 times slowly)
Bridges, brooks, forests, fields; Hills and mountains, tunnels deep (2)
We're on our way, chugging away
Ta-dak, ta-dak...
Chai, chai! Coffee, coffee! (2 times slowly)

³By Karadi Tales. YouTube link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umc1O5tVZbY>

Mumbai, Patna, Guwahati; Delhi, Bhopal, Kanyakumari (2)
We're on our way, chugging away
Ta-dak, ta-dak
Chai, chai! Coffee, coffee! (2 times slowly, 4 times super-fast!)



Figure 40 Rhymes with actions help children develop fluency and comprehension, as much as they are for fun and enjoyment.

After the song is sung over a period of many days, the teacher divides the class into two groups. Group 1 plays the role of vendors or professionals, like vegetable seller and bus conductor while Group 2 becomes the customer or passenger. Group 1 has to make catchy one-liners like '*Chai, chai! Coffee, coffee!*' while Group 2 has to respond with equally catchy one-liners. The teacher helps Group 2 as their task is slightly more complex. Some lines which the students came up with are:



Orange, orange! Apple, apple! – Give, give! Give, give!
Nimbu, mirchi! Nimbu, mirchi! – How much, how much? How much,
how much?
Ticket, ticket! Ticket, ticket! – Take the money! Take the money!



Classroom 2

The second English classroom has younger children. The teacher cannot sing an English song which has very long or complex structures, so she chooses a relatively simpler and easier song to sing. It is about a musician who plays several musical instruments. To introduce the rhyme, the teacher takes the role of a musician, mimics playing an instrument and asks her students to guess which musical instruments it is that she is playing. The students

respond with a variety of musical instruments like guitar, tabla, and harmonium, which the teacher notes on the blackboard. The teacher then shows children a few YouTube clips of different musical instruments and asks her students to identify the different sounds and the instruments they belong to. She then asks her students to try and mimic the sounds made by these instruments and choose the sounds which best represent each instrument. The students have fun making these sounds! The teacher then sings the song one or two times. She sticks the song chart on the wall and points to each word as she sings along. After some time, the students are ready to sing along. In the next English class, she plays the role of the musician and assigns the line 'What can you play?' from the song exclusively to the students. She sings:



I am a Musician

I am a musician, and I come from far away!

And I can play!

What can you play? (children call this line out)

I play the tabla... thapthapthapthapthapthapthap...

I play the harmonium... (harmonium sound)

I play the dholak... (dholak sound)



After singing the song, the teacher initiates a conversation with her students by asking them various questions using a lot of English. She encourages them to respond in their local language while using keywords like 'play' and 'musical instrument' in English. Some of the questions she can ask are:



Which instrument do you like best? Why?

Which instrument would you like to play?

Do you know how to play any instrument? Where did you learn to play it?

Do you know anyone who can play an instrument?



Questions for the reader

1. Can you think of the associated learning outcomes for these two activities?
2. These two activities are done by two very hard-working teachers. Think about and discuss how such activities can be shared with teachers in our field contexts.



A note on Total Physical Response and its importance in language learning

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a method of teaching 'foreign languages', developed by Professor James Asher in the 1960s. As the name suggests, TPR activities encourage learners to respond with physical/motor movements using their whole bodies in response to instructions given in the target language (in our context, English). Asher said that young children have a proclivity or natural tendency to interact with the world using their whole bodies. Therefore, TPR is not only a physical involvement but also a cognitive involvement in the process of



Figure 41 Young children have a natural tendency to interact with the world using their whole bodies

learning. This helps early language learners understand things better as in the case of children, physical/motor movements and cognitive functions are not entirely separate. For instance, children talk to themselves and try to figure out many things while playing with some objects or trying to work on some material, like toys, utensils, sticks, different parts of a toy, machine or cycle.

They also tend to be fidgety when they are asked to sit still and quiet for some time. Involving them physically in the language classroom tends to bring better results.

Simply put, the strategy of TPR is to have the students listen to a command in English and immediately obey with a physical action. For example, the teacher says 'sit', 'stand', and 'clap' and the students respond by sitting, standing, then clapping their hands. Asher believed that this strategy mimics the natural process of language acquisition where children first develop 'listening fluency' (listening comprehension), after which they become confident enough to make language utterances of their own. Activities falling under the TPR umbrella are those which involve a lot of physical/motor movement and actions, like rhymes and songs, pretend play like cooking games, and language game, like charades and *Simon Says*. It is important to note that it is not just the children who are expected to perform TPR activities; the teacher also uses all the actions and expressions. expected from children. To understand this better, let us look at a language classroom where the teacher is carrying out the TPR activity of making the dough for *rotis*.

The teacher has a short discussion with her students about their favourite food items. She gets a variety of responses – dal-chawal, dal-bati, churma, roti-subji, rice, chocolate, ice-cream. She writes these food items on the blackboard and tells children that they will make two dishes today. The first will be roti. She asks the ingredients for making rotis. "Atta and water," they say. The teacher then enthusiastically says "So let us make some rotis!

Here are the instructions and questions put forward by the teacher, completely in English. She also asks everyone to follow all the actions along with her:

“First, we will take some atta. Some flour. Where is it? It is in this box.”

She pretends to open a box and the children open their own imaginary boxes.

“But where should I put this atta? On a plate or paraat? The students all say, “Paraat.”

“Okay! So, let us put some flour on this paraat.”

She pretends to put some flour on a paraat, then sprinkle the remaining atta; students follow.

“Okay! Now, what should we do next?”

The children respond in their local language that they should add water.

“Chalo! Let us add some water. Where is the water? Here it is!”

She pretends to open a bottle of water and pour some into the paraat; the children follow.

“Should I add more water?”

She begins to add more water and stops when the students ask her to; some children add copious amounts of water and laugh.

“Now let us knead this atta into a dough. Come on!”

She pretends to knead the flour into a dough and the children energetically follow; some of them begin jumping up and down while kneading their flour.

There is an equally elaborate game of making rotis. Actions like rolling out a roti with the belan/rolling pin, switching on the gas, striking a matchstick, lighting the flame, putting on the tawa, etc. follow.

The teacher ends the class with a rhyme which everyone repeats energetically:



*Papa's rotis, round and small,
Puffed up like a ping-pong ball!
Papa's rotis, on a plate,
I sat down and finished eight!*



For the next day, the teacher asks her class to discuss among themselves and come up with one more dish which they would like to prepare. After a lot of squabbling, the class decides on a sweet-dish – kheer! Can you help the teacher prepare instructions for making kheer?



Questions for the reader

1. Can you think of a few more enjoyable TPR activities?
2. Are TPR activities only for language games or rhymes?
3. What is the best way to share TPR activities with teachers so that they try such activities in their classrooms too?

2.2.3 CP 3. Storytelling and read-alouds

Why is story-telling important?

There is hardly anyone who does not like stories. Stories make our imagination soar and fill our worlds with possibilities and adventures. Story is one of the best comprehensible input as it provides detailed information and context to the listeners. Narrating stories is more effective in the initial stage than reading out stories because voice intonation, actions, appropriate pauses help the listener make meaning of the story in the given language. We



Figure 42 The age-old art of storytelling is a hallmark of being human!

We need to understand the difference between *teaching* a story and *telling* a story. In teaching a story as a piece of work or literature as it happens in most of our classrooms, the teacher presents and explains the events, actions and characters of the story. Here the purpose is different.

Choosing the right kind of story

How will you choose stories for children? We have a lot of them available in the textbooks, supplementary readers, publications of NBT, CBT, NCERT, Eklavya and many other private publications. Don't you feel we need to choose the ones children like, those that match their age and language level? So, consider the following⁴ when choosing stories to tell in the classroom:

- Find stories your children will like.
- Stories that match their age and language level (simple plot, contextual characters, simple events, and having predictive language).
- Choose stories you like narrating.
- Choose stories with simple structures (simple subject-verb-object agreement).
- Avoid didactic stories. Stories should be such the children can understand and critique actions, characters, ideas, themes and make judgements expressing their own opinions.
- Choose stories that relate to children's daily life and their thinking, curiosity and interest.



Essential reading

The Sense of Story by Gordon Wells in *The Meaning Makers: Learning to Talk and Talking to Learn* (1987/2009)

⁴ Adapted from Pederson (1995)



**List of desired teaching sub-practices for storytelling and read-alouds.
In an effective classroom, the teacher:**

- 3.1. Conducts storytelling/read-aloud sessions through dedicated slots in the English period (preferably on a daily basis).
- 3.2. Uses an appropriate mix of storytelling and read-aloud sessions.
- 3.3. Tells/reads stories interactively using actions and expressions.
- 3.4. Encourages children to try telling/reading stories by performing actions and using expressions.
- 3.5. Uses various storytelling techniques, like taking pauses, asking children to guess what will happen next, etc.
- 3.6. Holds conversations about the story through a mix of comprehension and inferential questions (over time, the questions become more critical and the use of language also becomes more complex, as in classes IV and V).
- 3.7. Uses stories to contextually build the vocabulary of children.
- 3.8. Uses stories to practice awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) through diverse tasks.
- 3.9. Writes down the stories in big books, story charts or the blackboard to build awareness of print and practice reading in general.
- 3.10. Introduces new stories (apart from those prescribed in the textbook) which connect to the daily life experiences, contexts, interests, age, etc. of children.
- 3.11. Creates specific opportunities for children to participate in/design role-plays and skits for deeper engagement with stories.
- 3.12. Uses stories as the basis for writing – initially letting children respond through scribbling and drawing then progressing to writing a few words or sentences through shared, guided, and independent writing tasks.
- 3.13. Uses a mix of comprehension and inferential questions to assess children's comprehension of the story (both oral and written).
- 3.14. Creates multiple opportunities to assess the pseudo-production of English by children. For example, Are children able to retell the story as given? Are children able to use keywords/expressions in English?
- 3.15. Checks oral comprehension of stories through talk and conversations by asking a mix of comprehension and inferential questions.
- 3.16. Creates multiple opportunities to assess reading (from identifying words to independent reading) using the printed forms of stories.
- 3.17. Assesses the written responses to stories through planned written assignments (from drawing and scribbling to independent writing).
- 3.18. Uses feedback from assessment to develop further plans for working on stories.

Illustrative activities for storytelling and read-alouds

1 Illustrative activity 1: Story narration without books

When we tell a story to children without books, we have two significant advantages. We can make eye contact and our hands and faces are free to be much more expressive. We can keep the plot loose and help children engage with it, in a way that they are creating it with us. There is a wonderful sense of suspense: Where will this story go? How will it end? Usually, nobody knows! As a result, children who might squirm and get distracted when you read a book to them often listen with rapt attention to an unknown, unfolding story. In the beginning, it is important that the teacher sticks to very basic English words, some of them could be sight words that she has already introduced to the class.

एक tiger था। वह सबसे पूछता— “जंगल का king कौन ?” Everybody कहते—“आप ही हो friend. Tiger rabbit से पूछा। Rabbit बोला— “आप ही हो friend.” Tiger आगे walk karte karte gaya तो Cheetah मिला। Tiger ने पूछा— “ Jungle का king कौन ?” Cheetah बोला— “It is only you my friend.” Tiger आगे walk karte karte gaya तो elephant मिला। Tiger ने पूछा— “जंगल का king कौन?” Elephant ने नहीं सुना। Tiger again asked — “जंगल का king कौन ?” Again elephant ने नहीं सुना। Tiger roared। Elephant को गुस्सा आ गया he became very angry। Elephant ने tiger को एक बार trunk से मारा। Second time मारा। जब third time मारा तो tiger बोला— “अरे friend, बताओ या मत बताओ, मारते क्यों हो why?” यह कहकर tiger ran away।

The teacher introduces a few words and, subsequently, after the children have become comfortable with the plot, she exposes the children to phrases.

There was a tiger. वह सबसे पूछता— “Who is the king of the jungle?” Everybody said, “you are the one my friend.” Tiger asked Rabbit. Rabbit replied, “It is only you my friend.” Tiger आगे walk karte karte gaya and met a Cheetah. Tiger ने asked, “Who is the king of the jungle?” Cheetah बोला— “It is only you my friend.” Tiger आगे walk karte karte gaya and met elephant. Tiger ने asked, “Who is the king of the jungle?” Elephant ने did not listen. Tiger again asked, “Who is the king of the jungle?”. Again elephant did not listen. Tiger roared. Elephant became very angry. Elephant ने tiger को एक बार apne trunk से hit kia. Second time hit kia. When third time hit kia, then tiger said, “oh my friend, you बताओ या मत बताओ, why are you hitting me?” यह कहकर the tiger ran away.

2 Illustrative activity 2: Story weaving

Most children, even in our field contexts, have an active vocabulary of English without even knowing about it. These words are mixed liberally with the local language, unconsciously. In fact, English has so seeped into our lives that even those who have never been formally schooled use a smattering of English words in daily life. If a list is made, these words can touch double or even triple digits. Here is an illustration that highlights that even young students know some English words (and a mix of other words, like proper nouns and Hindi words freely used in English):

Let us read about a teacher, newly transferred to a school, who has realized that one of the classes she teaches is not at all comfortable with English. The students have had little to no exposure to English stories and conversations. They are almost petrified of the language!

The teacher talks to the students and makes a list of English words they know. She comes up with a list similar to the one above. She realizes that her students collectively know about 120 English words! This is very encouraging. She writes them all down on a chart paper and pastes it on the wall. Perhaps, her students know more such words but could not recall all at the time. Or perhaps, they do not even know that those are English words! The teacher then picks out a few words from the list and uses them along with the local language to make a story. Here is the story she made and narrated:

“ Ek baar ek boy aur girl ek game khel rahe the. Boy ka name tha Ratan aur girl ka name tha Chanchal. Socho kaunsa game khel rahe the? Yes! Cricket khel rahe the! Dono ek plastic bat aur rubber ball ke sath cricket khel rahe the. Lekin khelte-khelte wo bore ho gae! Ratan ne bola, 'Chalo, koi aur game khelte hain!' Chanchal ne bola, 'Nahi mera painting karne ka mann hai!' Lekin dono ke paas paint, brush, paper – kuch bhi nahi tha! Sochte-sochte unke dimaag mein ek idea aya! Socho kya idea aya hoga? ”

The teacher has a long conversation with her students about what Ratan and Chanchal must have done. She asks them what they would do in such a situation. Here are some of the responses she got:

“ Meenalal: *Bade bhaiya se maangta.*
 Jyotsna: *Papa ko bolti ki market jana hai. Par papa paise nahi dete!*
Hmm...
 Gopal: *Main koi aur game khelta.*
 Munni: *Koyle se deewar pe painting kar sakte hain, Ma'am!*
 Barkha: *Ma'am, main ghar jaake painting karti. Mere paas sab kuch hai! Paint, brush, paper, colour, scale, pencil, rubber, sharpener, sketch-pen, chart paper...*
 Atmaram: *Mujhe painting acchi nahi lagti! So main bohot khush ho jata!* ”

The teacher then asks her students which English words she has used in the story. They try to recall, and she makes a note of those words on the blackboard. She also points out those words on the chart paper which she had just stuck on the wall. The students realize that they know many more English words like 'bore', 'plastic', 'rubber', and 'painting' which they had not told their teacher. This boosts their morale. They enjoyed the story and understood it despite so many English words! The bell rings, and it is time to go home!

In the next English class, the teacher divides her students into five groups. She asks each group to choose five to six words from the list and make a story of their own. In the next class, all the students share their stories. The students roll around in laughter! The teacher realizes that her class is very creative! She notices something else. The students have used a few English words which they had not even shared earlier! The teacher points out these words to the class and exclaims with amazement about how often we use English words in our daily lives without even knowing about it! The students smile shyly but the teacher notes a hint of pride and happiness on their faces. She writes their stories down on chart papers using a mix of Roman and Devanagari script. She pastes these charts on the wall next to the word chart made earlier. She, then, asks the students to look at the charts and try to read the English words they had used in their stories. She helps them in doing so. She notices a considerable increase in the interest and motivation levels in her students. She becomes hopeful.



Figure 43 A teacher making a big book from a story in the textbook, for reading aloud in the classroom



Questions for the reader

1. Can you think of the associated learning outcomes?
2. How do you think the students must have felt after participating in such an exercise?
3. The teacher wrote everything down on the blackboard and chart papers. She kept pointing out the words and asked her students to find English words in their story charts. Why do you think she did this even though her children did not know how to read?

People they know	Words related to school life	Words from home and neighbourhood	Media and Technology	Games	Food
Teacher, Doctor, Nurse, Head Master, Head Teacher, Sarpanch, Driver, Auto- wallah, Chai- wallah, Collector, Baby, Boy, Girl, Mummy, Papa, Friend, etc.	School, Class, Dustbin, Chalk, Duster, Toilet, Copy, Book, Colour, Scale, Pencil, Brush, Paint, Shirt, Pant, Skirt, Collar, Tie, Bag, Belt, Socks, Sir, Madam, Homework, etc.	Handpump, Market, Home, House, Bathroom Auto, Bus, Bike, Car, Road, Accident, Medical, Aunty, Bottle, Aadhar card, Company, Cement, Gate, Glass, Handpump, Plastic, Glass, etc.	Mobile, Phone, Charger, Recharge, SIM card, Cover Touchscreen, Wire, Samsung, Nokia, Apple, Airtel, Jio, Network, Battery, Screen, YouTube, Video, Camera, Selfie, etc.	Bat, Ball, Cricket, Run, Over, Out, Cheating, Game, Kabaddi, Kho-kho, etc.	Chocolate, Ice-cream, <i>Roti, Puri</i> <i>Dal, Bati,</i> <i>Samosa</i> <i>Idli,</i> Chutney, <i>Dosa,</i> Toffee, Cake, Cold- drink, Coke, Pepsi, Frooti, etc.

2.2.4 CP 4. Creating and using a print-rich environment

Importance of print-rich environment in language learning

A 'print-rich environment' is one where printed or written material of different kinds and in many formats is available to the child in her natural environment like home, neighbourhood, and school. Examples of such material are calendars, signboards, hoardings, posters, advertisements, wrappers, registers, notices, etc. Such print

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
RED GROUP	TIGER GROUP	RABBIT GROUP	LEOPARD GROUP	LOTUS GROUP	PLANE GROUP
Chaitoo	Mohaverr	Riya	Hawan	Ekta	Kiskar
Ranveer	Rishika	Lalita	Sowaf	Jaswanti	Ramesh
Lokendra	Jaswanti	Tanika	Virat	Muskan	Tanveer
Muskan	Muskanika	Ravindra	Imran	Dinesh	Bhupendra
Krishna	Vasanta	Chandakant	Jasoda	Harsh	Lakshpreet

Figure 44 A chart on allocation of assembly duties, which has a function in the children's daily lives, and is used every day.

serves practical purposes, like giving information and attracting attention to buy things. Books and magazines also contribute to a print-rich environment but there are few children in our field contexts who have such exposure at home. The Position Paper on Teaching of English itself says that the 'the classroom must display signs, charts, and notices that organise its work, even as a middle-class home does.' (2006)

Providing samples of familiar print from the market or school helps children understand the utility of written language in our day-to-day lives. Besides this, they should also know that what we say, think and imagine can also be written. Hence, the necessity of displaying rhymes, poems, stories, talk and factual pieces in the classroom that enable children to get exposure to written materials in different forms and make meaning out of them. However, this does not happen automatically. The teacher needs to ensure children's engagement with the print by the way of involving them in paying attention to different aspects of the print – words, pictures, letters, ideas, storyline and information. This involves selection of material that can create language and literacy opportunities and therefore, necessitates nuanced planning of every lesson the teacher teaches. A print-rich environment ensures that children get exposure to various, relevant materials in the

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Saturday	Poha	Mix (chana, dal, roti)	Dal Chawal (roti)
Sunday	Poha	Mix (chana, dal, roti)	Dal Chawal (roti)
Monday	Lapsi	Phul Jalebi (dal, roti)	Dal Chawal (roti)
Tuesday	Namkeen Chawal	Mix (chana, dal, roti)	Dal Chawal (roti)
Wednesday	Chana	Mix (chana, dal, roti)	Dal Chawal (roti)
Thursday	Poha	Mix (chana, dal, roti)	Dal Chawal (roti)
Friday	Lapsi	Mix (chana, dal, roti)	Dal Chawal (roti)

Figure 45 The mid-day meal chart is another form of print for frequent interaction. It is usually written in the local language, and we can make it in English too.

target language which they can touch, read, experience and make meaning of. A critical point to note is that a print-rich environment is not an *activity* or a product to display. As the name indicates, it is an *environment* that is created and built over time, with the active involvement of the

teacher and students. One does not conduct activities exclusively to create a print-rich environment. However, there can certainly be a number of activities the teacher can design to facilitate the interaction and engagement of her students with the print material. Even so, the print-rich environment, in itself, inevitably evolves with the process of teaching language in an integrated skills classroom. You may have seen this in many of the activities illustrated so far, where the teacher pays special attention to writing down words and phrases on the blackboard or to developing charts of rhymes, songs, stories, and words children know (you can go back and check!). Since children are still building language familiarity, the teacher does not draw too much attention to the print, but she nonetheless creates that environment for wholesome language exposure.



Figure 46 Samples of an interactive and functional print-rich environment

She does not do all this merely to fill the board/walls or to have something in the name of print. This is precisely what differentiates a *truly* print-rich classroom from a classroom where lots of store-bought charts and other print material are simply put up and never interacted with by the children. We have seen many such classrooms which appear to be print-rich but serve no real purpose in developing the reading and writing abilities of children. To sustain children's interest and attention to the material available in the classroom, the teacher needs to make sure that the stories,

pictures, poems, words on the word wall, etc. keep changing every week or fortnight through the course of teaching. Another important point to note is that the teacher may initially have to work very hard to build this environment in the classroom, but she will have greater support of her learners as they transition to knowing and understanding the script.

It is important to talk to teachers to find out their precise challenges in developing such an environment in their classrooms. The first hurdle teachers generally face is not knowing what kind of print is relevant for a particular class. The second challenge could be not being able to find ways to procure or create the material, or weave it with the process of teaching. The third and biggest hurdle is usually planning children's engagement with print – how to initiate it and how to take it further? This happens commonly with teachers who have even managed to create colourful or beautiful classrooms but have a few scattered activities for children's engagement with the print material, or no plan at all.

The table below summarizes the common misconceptions about print-rich environments and how it should be.

Misconceptions about a print-rich environment	How it should be...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective is to decorate the classroom with colourful and interesting material for children so that they are induced to read and write. • Belief is that children will enjoy being in such a decorated classroom and will feel motivated to study. • Material is largely teacher-created or store-bought. • Walls are painted in bright colours with the alphabet, fruit, vegetables, calendar, etc. and stay the same, all-year-round. • Special activities like drawing and painting may be conducted to fill the classroom with more material. • Books are neatly displayed for others to see. • Requires heavy investment in terms of money and teacher's time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective is to help children develop the understanding that print carries meaning, and that reading and writing, have a purpose in real life. • Teachers and students co-create grade-appropriate material. • There are no separate activities simply to create a print-rich environment. It evolves organically through the process of teaching language and is contextual to the current themes of the class. • Books are not merely for display. Children flip through them and engage with them based on some ground-rules which are collectively developed. The teacher is not too bothered about books being torn, so long as they are being enjoyed and read. • Teacher continuously engages with the printed material and plans activities for children to interact with the material.

Here, we will mention a few activities that make use of a print-rich environment for developing the reading and writing abilities of children. While availability of children's literature, big books through a reading corner, etc. are an integral part of a print-rich environment, we shall be dealing with them separately since they are important in themselves and require detailed discussion.



Questions for the reader

1. Have you learnt something new about print-rich environments after reading the above section?
2. You must have come across some teachers who have attempted to create a print-rich environment in their schools. What efforts have they made and what more would you recommend to them?



Essential reading

ELI Handout 8: Creating a Print-rich Environment in Classroom (2019).



Here is a detailed list of desired teaching practices for creating and using a print rich environment.

In an effective classroom, the teacher:

4. Creating and using a print-rich environment

- 4.1. Evolves a dynamic (frequently changing) print-rich environment in the classroom using relevant material which is either store-bought or self-made or made by children during the course of teaching.
- 4.2. Creates the print material at low cost with locally available resources so that it can be easily replicated for other children/classrooms.
- 4.3. Places the print material at the eye-level of children or in accessible spaces so that they can independently engage with it.
- 4.4. Exposes children to books other than the prescribed English textbooks; e.g. storybooks, comics, and picture dictionaries.
- 4.5. Plans activities for children to engage with the print material so that the material is not merely displayed for decoration.
- 4.6. Encourages children to independently engage with the print material without being too worried about its wear and tear.
- 4.7. Uses the print material to build awareness of print and practice reading in general.
- 4.8. Uses the print material to practice awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) through diverse tasks.
- 4.9. Uses the print material as the basis for writing - initially letting children respond through scribbling and drawing then progressing to writing a few words or sentences through shared, guided, and independent writing tasks.
- 4.10. Takes the support of the print material to create multiple opportunities for assessing reading (from identifying words to independent reading).
- 4.11. Takes the support of the print material to create multiple opportunities for assessing writing (from drawing and scribbling to independent writing).
- 4.12. Assesses the children's interaction with the print material to develop further plans for making the classroom print-rich.

Illustrative activities for creating and using a print-rich environment

1 Illustrative activity 1: Beginning with children's names

Write the names of all the students in the classroom on chart papers using big, bold letters. Use these names for a variety of word and letter identification activities like:

Reading words	Working on letters and sounds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify your name and mark yourself present with a tick mark or 'P'. Find your name and stick your photograph next to it. Match the name in the flashcard with the name on the chart paper (<i>names will have to be written on flashcards for this activity</i>). Identify your friend's name and mark his/her presence or absence. Help your teacher take attendance. Mark who is present or absent. Read all the names and number them. How many girls and boys are in the class? Make a list and write it down in your notebook. Are there two or more students with the same name? Point out such names. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which names begin with the letter 'S'? Write them on the board. Pick a letter card and find names beginning with that letter (<i>letter cards are required for this activity</i>). Circle the names which do not have the letter 'p'. Identify the names which begin with /m/ sound and write them on the board. Which is the shortest/longest name? Which letters does it have? Which name has two of the same letters? In which names does a sound repeat twice? Write down the names in your notebook in alphabetical order. Which letters are capitalized? Do these capital letters come in the beginning, middle, or end of the names?

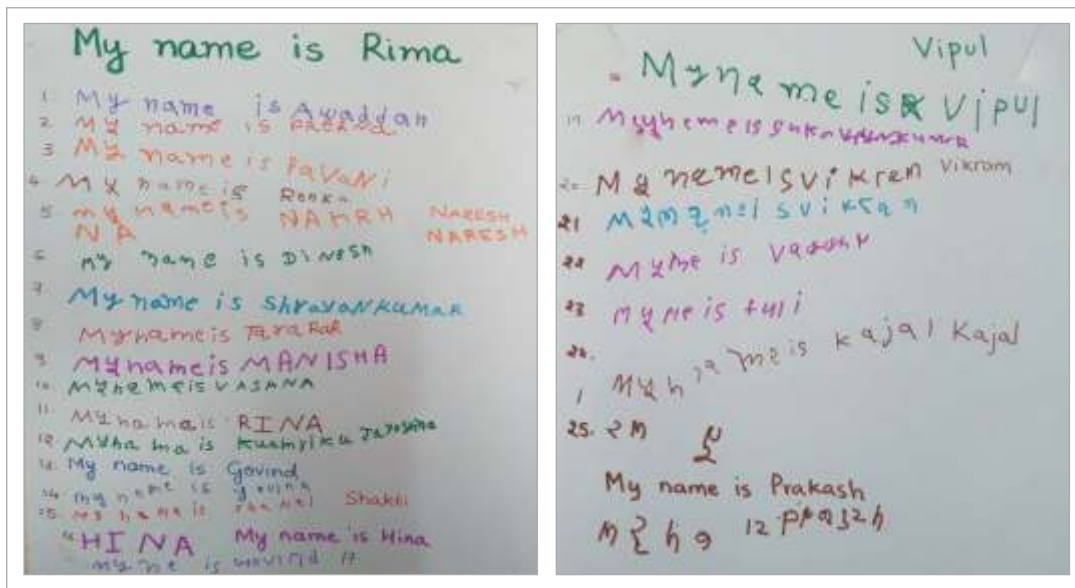


Figure 47 The teacher has helped children write a sentence to introduce their names. She has encouraged them to look up the spellings of their names from the name chart and their notebooks. Based on what is written, can you identify the children at different stages of writing?

2 Illustrative activity 2: Making name cards

1. The teacher goes around the class and asks each child's name. She writes down the names one by one and shows them to children, pointing out their names.
2. She calls the children by name and hands over their cards to them one by one, once again pointing out what is written. She asks children to decorate their cards by tracing the letters, colouring, etc.
3. She asks children to take the card home, play with it, and bring it back the next day.
4. She collects the cards the next day and jumbles them in a pile on the floor.
5. She asks children to pick their own name cards from the pile and give it to her.

The children are likely to pick their own cards because of its size, shape, and design. This does not mean that children are able to read, but they start their journey of reading and writing with this. Many more activities can be planned around these cards to further strengthen the association between the spoken and the written word. Activities can also be planned for sounds and letters, as given in the table above.

Some variations

- A **birthday chart** can also be made using the names of students (divided into months).
- Students can make an **attendance register** and take turns marking the attendance every day along with their teacher.
- Students can fill an '**About Me**' **worksheet** with more details and stick these on the wall. For example, My favourite animal, Name of my village.



Questions for the reader

1. Why is beginning with the names of students a good introduction to reading?
2. Can you develop 2-3 interesting 'About Me' worksheets which you would recommend to teachers?

3 Illustrative activity 3 : Labelling objects in the classroom

Labels are an essential component of a print-rich environment, especially in an early language classroom. They offer opportunities to use printed language in real and meaningful ways as children interact with these objects every day. Labels with pictures aid reading comprehension in the very young or beginner learners. Given below are some possible steps for labelling the classroom. The teacher must ensure that she does not simply give out instructions but talks to the students; asks questions; and, engages with them every step of the way.

- The teacher can devote an entire period to talk with students about different objects they see in their classroom and write these words on the blackboard, for example, chair, table, window, dustbin, bulb, switch, etc. She can involve students in writing by talking about the different sounds and letters so that they make guesses about the spellings. These words can also be written on a chart paper so that they are available even when the words on the blackboard are erased.



Figure 48 A set of colourful labels, ready to be put up all over the classroom.

- In the next class, the teacher can tear out labels from A4 sheets or chart papers with the help of students. She should take care that the labels are of a decent size – neither too big nor too small. 4-5 labels from an A4 sheet is optimal.
- The teacher can assign each student a word or ask them to choose their own. She should arrive at the font-size of the labels by talking to her students. It is important to have a decent font-size so that the labels can be read from a distance too.
- The teacher can demonstrate by making one label herself.
- The students can now write down their labels by referring to the words written on the blackboard or chart paper. In this step, the teacher must take care to supervise each student and provide help wherever required. She must also ask the students to help each other. Some students may benefit if

their labels are dotted beforehand so that they simply need to trace their word(s). Alternatively, students can write however they please and the teacher can herself make another label to match.

- Students can spend some time decorating their labels or adding pictures.
- Sticking the labels in the right place can be an activity by itself. The teacher can read out the labels or ask students to read out labels and stick them in the right place using tape or glue.



Figure 49 Three kinds of labels (from l to r) – copy the word, trace the dots, and write independently. An example of how all children can be involved in the same activity. The teacher has already talked to children about these words to make the activity meaningful.

Possible post-labelling activities

Merely labelling the classroom is not enough to teach the English language. There is so much more that can be done after the classroom has been labelled!

- Students can label their belongings, for example, school bag, pencil box, book, tiffin box, and water bottle.
- Students can make another set of labels for a matching activity.
- An activity to find labels which begin with the same sound, for example, /w/ in 'window' and 'wall'.
- An activity to find labels containing a letter, for example, 'a'.
- An activity to find labels which have only 5 letters. Which labels are they?
- After enough practice, the teacher can remove the existing labels or label the objects wrongly and ask students to put the new labels in their correct place. (This activity is important to check if students are truly reading the words or simply guessing by looking at the object).



Figure 50 Children put labels that can later be used for numerous reading activities

Another version: Word Cards with pictures

- The teacher talks to the children about their favourite animals.
- She gives each child a card with the picture of their favourite animal on one

side and its name on the other. She points out what is written each time. (*The pictures can be animal outlines for children to colour. Some cards can be made beforehand while a few blank cards can be made after the first step.*) She asks children to colour and decorate their cards, including their names.

- She asks children to take the card home, play with it, and bring it back the next day.
- She collects the cards the next day and staples blank sheets of paper over the picture side so that children focus more on the names of the animals. She jumbles the cards on the floor.
- She asks children to pick their own animal cards from the pile and give it to her.

A few children will begin to recognize their animal cards even without the picture by looking at the size, shape, and design of their words. This does not mean that children are able to read, but they start on their journey of reading and writing. Many more activities can be planned around these cards to further strengthen the association between the spoken and the written word. This can also be done with cards of fruits, birds, actions, etc.



Figure 51 Labelled pictures commonly heard/read by children in the everyday course of learning English. They are stuck on the walls and will remain there long after the teacher leaves the room.

Some variations

- A picture-dictionary of objects in the classroom can be made. The students will do all the work and the teacher will simply help bind the pages together.
- Students can make name badges by referring to their name charts. They can pin these when they come inside the class and take the badges off before going home.
- Students can make their own blank labels and take them home for labelling their household objects! In their notebooks, they can make a list of all the objects they have labelled and bring it to school to share with the class. Alternatively, they can try to make the list in the class itself. If there are

spelling errors, the teacher can write the correct spellings on the board and ask students to compare their spellings with the ones written on the board.

- Classroom signs like 'Throw waste paper here' (near a dustbin), 'Hang your bottles here' (near a nail or shelf), and 'Line your shoes here' (outside the classroom) can also be made as an extension of the labelling activity.
- A chart of classroom rules which are collectively developed can also be made. For example, We will listen to each other, and We will clean the blackboard before going home.



Figure 52 A small yet meaningful attempt by the teacher to add print to the school environment. Children go to the taps every day to wash their hands before and after meals. Do you think the teacher has made this all by herself?



Questions for the reader

1. Apart from reading words, are there other learning outcomes which can be achieved through labelling activities?
2. Which initial steps to labelling the classroom would *you* recommend to teachers?



Essential reading

Classroom Labelling: A Staff Training Aid.

4 Illustrative activity 4: Working with rhyme charts

Associated Learning Outcomes

- Enjoys listening to and singing English songs and rhymes with actions
- Recites poems individually/in groups
- Reads print on the classroom walls: words, poems, posters, charts, etc.
- Recognizes letters and their sounds (a-z)
- Responds orally (in any language including sign language) to comprehension questions related to stories/poems
- Writes simple words like fan, hen, rat, etc.

Over a period of time, many of our engaged teachers have begun to realize the importance of singing rhymes and songs in English. They have made attempts to learn new rhymes and songs apart from the traditional 'Johnny, Johnny', 'Twinkle, twinkle', 'Baa, baa black sheep', etc. They have even done their best to sing energetically with a lot of actions and expression. In fact, many teachers made such singing attempts for the first time in their careers! The students in their class have also developed some degree of comfort with English because of these rhymes and songs. Teachers point out a boost in the confidence of their students when they see themselves effortlessly utter English through rhyme and song. This is a small yet very significant change in the mindset of teachers as it demonstrates an important shift in both, their understanding and effort. Teachers have begun to realize the importance of providing wholesome language input to their students in order to teach them English.

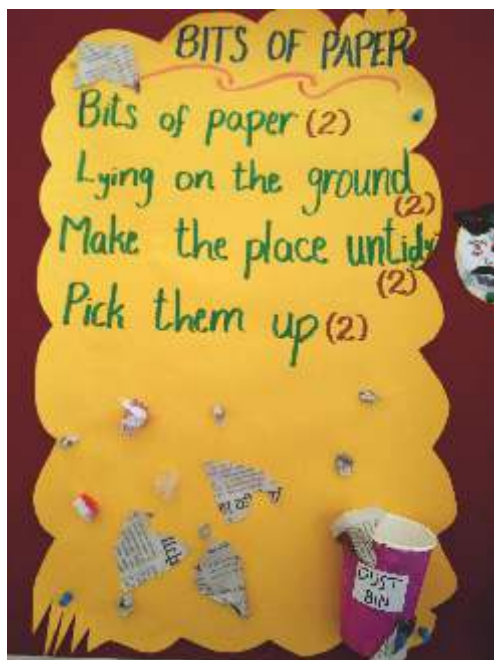


Figure 53 A rhyme on disposing waste the right way, made using commonly found waste material!

However, we have a huge roadblock ahead! While motivating teachers to use English rhymes and songs has perhaps been one of our core contributions to language teaching in schools, we have found it difficult to recommend further steps to the process. What happens *after* students have memorized several rhymes and songs? A meek answer comes – we can *talk*. We can have *conversations* about monkeys and discuss actions like 'jumping' and nouns like 'bed' through 'Five little monkeys'. But what next? How can we further build language skills in learners? This roadblock is not just for teachers but also for us.

Here are some suggested activities for rhymes and songs which attempt to answer the above questions. It is always good to write down the rhyme or song on a chart paper and paste it on the wall of the classroom for these activities.

- The teacher can recite the rhyme or song and ask students to place the finger on each word as it is being recited. This kind of 'finger-pointing' helps beginner readers understand that each chunk of letters (a written word) corresponds to what is spoken and that the blank spaces in between the chunks are important to set them apart. An important point to note is that such activities where students have to point to each word should only be attempted after a few trial demonstrations by the teacher. The teacher must step in from time to time to help the students until they become accustomed to the process. The process may be quite mechanical in the beginning but will slowly become more meaningful for students as they develop familiarity with the size and shapes of different words and realize that each written word stands for the words they know orally.
- Once students have a fair hold over finger-pointing to each word, the teacher can ask questions such as (taking the example of 'Ate a Peanut'),
 - What did the boy/girl eat? Can you point out where this word is written?
 - How many times do you see this word? Point out and count along.
 - Where is the title of the rhyme written? What does it say?
 - Who is called to treat the stomach-ache? Can you point out the word? Which letter occurs twice in this word? Are there other words containing this letter?
 - Can you locate the following words and spell them out on the blackboard – 'stomach', 'medication'. Try making a sentence each using these words. (The teacher need not force the students to make sentences in English. They can use their home language(s) or mixed language)
 - Which lines are repeated in the rhyme? Can you read them aloud?
 - Find the phrase, 'Thank you!'. How many words does this phrase contain? Do you want to say, 'Thank you!' to someone in the classroom?
 - Circle the letter 'a' on the rhyme chart. Read the words containing this letter. What are the different sounds made by this letter in this game? (This is a phonics activity on segmentation; more phonics activities are given later.)
 - Can you find any rhyming words?

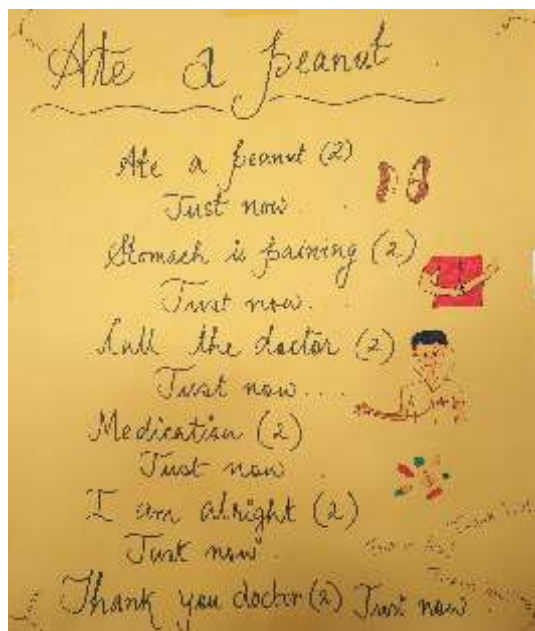


Figure 54 A rhyme chart can be used for a variety of literacy-related activities, as mentioned on the side.



Questions for the reader

1. Why do we find it so difficult to use rhymes beyond recitation and talk?
2. Take a learning outcome which is not listed above and discuss how it can be achieved by adding a few questions/activities.
3. Should there be one question/activity for each learning outcome?

5 Illustrative activity 5: Sight words

Sight words are those that are learnt or rather 'picked up' by 'sight' as they are short and frequently occurring words. We can easily form the visual memory of the 'shape' or 'sight' of these words rather than remembering how the word is spelt. The most commonly used words in English are articles, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, determiners, etc. which can be read fast and thus, help in the development of fluency in decoding the text. Fluent decoding of the text is important for the development of comprehension abilities too, as the meaning of a text becomes clear only when we read a chunk of words together in one go and connect that with another chunk of words. This builds a chain of thoughts regarding the meaning and helps readers form the complete idea of the text in their mind.

Interestingly, the meanings of many sight words, such as 'it' and 'and' can only be understood in the full sentence that these occur in. Many words can also not be depicted pictorially, for example, 'this', 'that', 'am', and 'do'. These qualities set most sight words apart from other words which students know, such as naming words (nouns), describing words (adjectives), and action words (verbs). This makes it all the more important to draw the children's attention to sight-words and practice these using charts and flashcards.

Please note, do not use charts or cards of sight words to teach these words. Use charts and cards only for practising these words.

Here are some common sight words encountered by beginner readers:

Common Sight Words				
I	like	yes	and	my
he	and	if	your	mine
it	up	want	are	she
this	go	me	want	No
that	will	do	you	because
do	am	the	have	A

A more contextual and detailed list of sight words can be drafted with the teachers for their respective classrooms. The more students read, the lengthier the list will become. Teachers can, in turn, develop such a list with the help of her students. She can ask them to read all the charts pasted in the

classroom and underline those words which occur most frequently. The teacher can slowly nudge the students towards identifying sight words in their textbooks, but she should specify the sections or pages to make the task more doable. It is best if the circled sight words are written on the blackboard, read aloud with the help of the teacher, then written on a chart paper and pasted on the wall for quick reference. The teacher must make at least one set of sight-word flashcards and run through them from time to time as a quick read-aloud or word-recognition game.



Questions for the reader

1. Can you think of a few more reading comprehension activities around sight words?
2. What kind of writing activities would you recommend to teachers for practising sight words?
3. Is it important for students in the early years to practise writing sight words?



Essential reading

High Frequency Sights Words List by Dolch and Fry; High Frequency Phrases and Short Sentences by Dolch and Fry; K1 Phonics – High Frequency Words.

2.2.5 CP 5. Developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics)

In the classroom practices and activities that we have discussed so far, you must have come across a few steps focusing on sounds and letters. These come under the broad category of developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) in children. Let us look at some corresponding activities.

Note: These are not stand-alone or isolated activities for developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics). The words, sounds, and letters used in the activities will be borrowed from the conversations, rhymes, songs, stories, etc. used by the teacher in the language classroom. This section is separately given here to understand each level in detail. Some activities for letters are given in the section that follows.



Essential reading

K1 Phonics – Alphabet Recognition

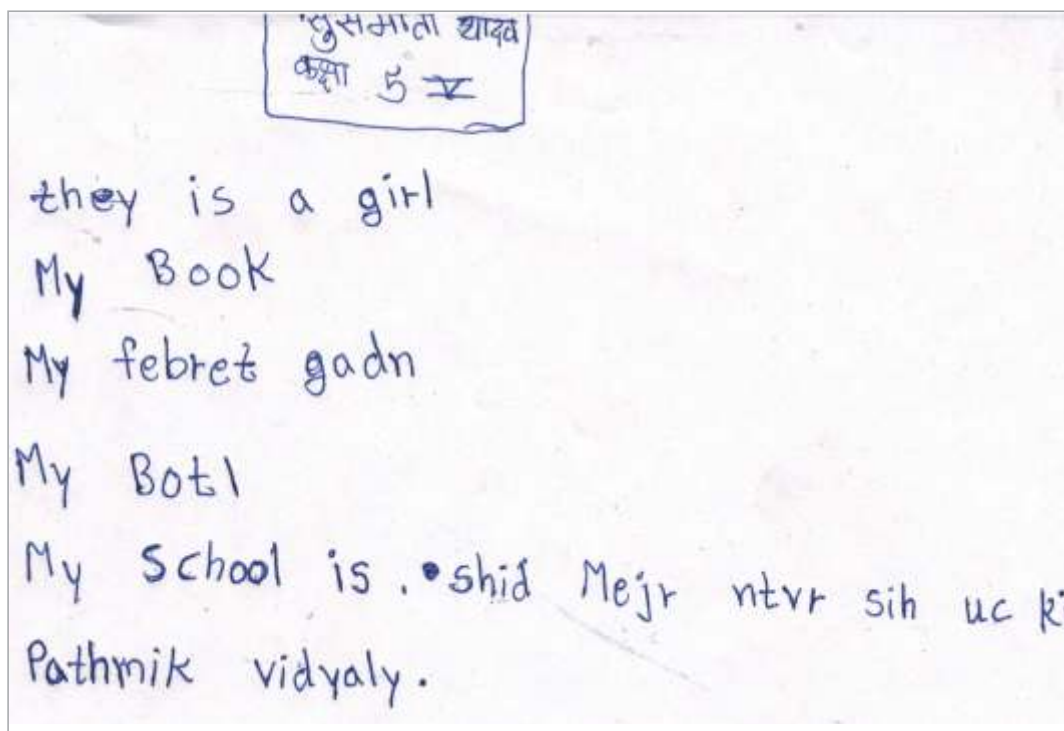


Figure 55 This writing sample of a class V girl shows her use of inventive spellings. Although she is not at the desired learning level for her age, she has reached a crucial stage of writing – that of developing sound-letter correspondence.



List of desired teaching sub-practices for developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).

In an effective classroom, the teacher:

- 5.1. Plans specific opportunities for children to build their awareness of print and practice reading, in general, using the written/printed forms of talk, conversations, rhymes, songs, poems, stories, etc. given in the textbooks, classroom print, blackboard, etc.
- 5.2. Draws attention to the sounds and letters in the printed/written material through diverse tasks to practice the awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).
- 5.3. Plans specific opportunities for children to journey from scribbling and drawing to independent writing (includes inventive spellings).
- 5.4. Lets the children make errors/mistakes in spellings/punctuation/grammar (the focus on accurate spellings/ punctuation/grammar gradually increases in classes IV and V through diverse exposures, and even then, the teacher is gentle and encouraging while correcting).
- 5.5. Creates multiple opportunities to assess children's awareness of print, awareness of sounds (phonological awareness), and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).
- 5.6. Uses feedback from assessment to develop further plans for working on the script.

Illustrative activities for developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness)



1 Illustrative activity 1: Identifying words in a spoken sentence

Children may initially not know that certain chunks of speech are actually separate words which are represented by different shapes when written down. This is why beginner writers have no spaces between their words but write in an unspaced, continuous line of letters! Developing a sense of separate words and the spaces between words is an important step in learning to read. Here are some activities that help.

- a. Clapping or jumping games are very popular when it comes to counting words. The teacher can read aloud a list of words, for example, 'desk', 'table', 'chair', 'dustbin', 'chalk', and 'duster' and ask the children to clap or jump when each of these words is read aloud. Finger snapping or any other little action can also be of use. The same activity can be done with sentences instead of words.
- b. We have already seen in the 'finger pointing' example above how children slowly begin to associate the spoken words with the written words while reciting a rhyme or singing a song and pointing each word on a chart.
- c. Associations can be built through PT exercises (one, two, three, four...), march-past activities (left-right-left), and dance steps (up, down, turn, jump) with the help of a drum. The teacher can beat the drum or hand-over the drum to students. More pairs or groups of words can be introduced to make the task more interesting and enjoyable.

2 Illustrative activity 2: Identifying and making oral rhymes

- a. Short rhymes with rhyming words should be recited loudly. Several loud recitations with a change in speech (slow/fast) will make it even more enjoyable for children. They can be asked to identify which words sound similar or almost the same, for example:

 *Up in the jamun tree*
High off the ground
I see a jamun
So small and round! 

- b. The teacher asks the students to stand in a circle and calls out a word, for example, 'wall' and tosses a ball to a child, who has to say a rhyming word, such as, 'tall'. The ball is passed among children till they run out of rhyming words! The teacher should encourage the production of 'nonsense' words (words without any conventional meaning) too, for example, 'zall' and 'jall', as the objective is to work on rhyming words, irrespective of their meaning.
- c. The teacher can make flashcards of pairs or trios of rhyming words like 'nut', 'but', and 'cut' and ask students to put the rhyming words together.

These can be later read aloud by each pair/ group. More rhyming words can be added to make the list longer.

- d. The teacher spreads out 30 pictures cards facing down, where each pair of cards contains pictures of rhyming words, like 'tub' and 'cub'. Children have to flip two cards at a time. If the cards do not rhyme, the children will put them back and try again. This continues till all the cards are matched with their rhyming pairs.



Figure 56 Activity 2d in progress

3 Illustrative activity 3: Identifying and working with syllables in spoken words

- a. Clapping games are very popular for identifying syllables. A sense of rhythm generally comes quite naturally to human beings, and children enjoy associating actions with sounds. The teacher can take many familiar words with single syllables and ask children to clap for each syllable, for example, 'dog', 'cat', 'ball', 'nose', and 'eye'. She can ask children to add words of their own to practice the concept of syllables. Slowly, words with two syllables, like 'papa', 'cartoon', 'balloon', and 'apple' and three syllables like 'banana', 'together', and 'principal' can also be used.
- b. The teacher can ask children to find out the number of syllables in their names. They can refer to the name chart for this activity.
- c. An equally popular technique is counting heartbeats where children thump their chests to mimic the sound of a heartbeat for each syllable. The teacher can pick familiar words, like g. 'monkey', 'jumping', 'bed', and 'doctor' and ask children to count the heartbeats.
- d. 'Jaw-dropping' is another technique where children place their hands below their jawline and count jaw-drops for each syllable.
- e. The humming technique is gaining popularity for identifying syllables where children do not voice the word aloud but hum it with their mouths closed. The teacher first asks the children to count the number of 'hums' for a word and then tell which syllable each hum stood for.
- f. Attaching a more concrete task to counting syllables is also very engaging for children. The teacher can give a pile of pebbles or bundle of sticks (or anything else available) and ask children to put aside one pebble or stick for every syllable. They can then count the number of syllables for the word and tell the teacher.
- g. Working on syllables is not just limited to words! The teacher can sing a

song with children and ask them to clap/beat/hum/jaw-drop for each syllable.



Ted.dy bear, ted.dy bear,
Touch the ground!
Ted.dy bear, ted.dy bear,
Turn a.round!
Ted.dy bear, ted.dy bear,
Po.lish your shoes!
Ted.dy bear, ted.dy bear,
Go to school!



And a familiar one for teachers:



Twin.kle twin.kle lit.tle star
How I won.der what you are
Up a.bove the world so high
Like a dia.mond in the sky



4 Illustrative activity 4: Identifying and working with onsets and rimes in spoken syllables or one-syllable words

- a. Minimal pairs of words (pairs of words with one different sound and different meanings like 'pray' and 'play', 'red' and 'bed', 'toy' and 'boy', etc.) provide a good context for breaking words into onsets and rimes. The teacher can voice minimal pairs of words with the same rimes and ask children to identify the differing onsets. The teacher can ask children to make more words too (these can also be nonsense words or words which are yet unfamiliar to children e.g. 'coy', 'doy', and 'loy').
- b. The teacher can show pictures of different words and ask children to pick out the onset of the word from, for example, pictures of animals, furniture, things in school, and names of games.

5 Illustrative activity 5: Identifying and working with individual sounds in spoken words

- a. Tongue-twisters, such as, 'Red lorry, yellow lorry' are really fun for children to utter repeatedly. It can be turned into a fun, competitive game to see who can clearly say the tongue-twister aloud, the most number of times. Children will make many mistakes along the way and focus on the different sounds to avoid making those mistakes. The teacher can separate the sounds and ask children to identify words with similar sounds in the beginning, middle, or end, for example, /r/ and /l/ in case of 'Read lorry, yellow lorry'.
- b. Short sentences with alliterative sounds are not only fun to utter but also help children see which letters are used to make a particular sound if the sentences are written down. For example: 'Bring the book to the bookcase', 'Come and clean your chair', and 'Lali planted pink-petaled

flowers in the pot'. These sentences can be built in the form of a story where children contribute their own words to take it forward.

- c. The teacher can pick any two familiar words, such as, 'ball' and 'slipper' and tell children that she will point at different objects in the classroom/school and they have to say if the word begins with the same sound as 'ball' or 'slipper', for example, 'bat', 'sink', 'bell', 'bag', and 'spectacles'.

- d. The teacher can pick one word at a time, for example, 'ring' and ask the children to come forward whose name begins with the same sound, like 'Rishi' or 'Resham'. . She can also pick students and ask them to figure out which of their friends should come forward each time a word is spoken aloud.

- e. There are many activities through which the teacher can work on identifying and isolating sounds, for example, in the name chart above, children can be asked to isolate the first sound of their own names and identify other names beginning with the same sound. Similar work can also be done with sounds occurring in the middle or ends of names. When letters are introduced at the phonics stage, children can be asked to point out the corresponding letters too.

- f. Onomatopoeic words (words which phonetically imitate



Figure 57 If you examine this name chart made by children with the teacher's help, you find that all the girls add 'Kumari' to their names. At the phonological stage, names can be spoken aloud and categorized by children with the teacher's help, as illustrated in Activity 5e. Using the names of children is an excellent first step to build sound-letter awareness.



Figure 58 Onomatopoeic words are best experienced when voiced aloud and excellent contexts for working on sounds. The beauty of such words is that the teacher can borrow them from the local culture/context too! A fun way to play with sounds!

different sounds we hear around us, like 'clang', 'thud', 'boom', 'dhadaam') are a fun way to develop phonemic awareness! The teacher asks the children to close their eyes. She goes around the classroom and makes various sounds, such as knocking on the door, writing on the board, dragging a chair, and clapping her hands. Children guess what the teacher is doing. Then, everyone will open their eyes and the teacher will try to spell the different sounds with the help of children by asking questions like, "What should be the first letter?", "How many times should we add 'r'?", "Should we use 'a' or 'u'", etc. Children may give different onomatopoeic words for the

same sound, for example, 'charr' and 'kharr' for the sound made while dragging the chair. The teacher should try to spell all these words. There are usually no right or wrong ways to create new onomatopoeic words, so children feel motivated and empowered to create words of their own. The teacher can give onomatopoeic words of her own and ask children to try and spell them.

- g. Ending sounds are trickier to practice compared to initial sounds because they require more focus and attention. Word chains are very helpful in this regard. The teacher can give a word, say, 'duck' and ask children to identify the *last* sound and write a word which *begins* with the same sound. Children may find it slightly difficult to isolate ending sounds but will get there eventually with repeated practice and help. The same game can be played with sentences instead of words, but the game should either be played orally, or the teacher should take the responsibility of writing the sentences on the board.
- h. The teacher can give a particular cluster of letters (consonant clusters) and ask children to make as many words as they can using that cluster, for example, 'brother', 'bridge', and 'brick' using 'br'.

6 Illustrative activity 6: Combining or blending the separate sounds in a word to say the word

- a. The teacher can voice out different sounds of a word and ask children to blend them together to form the word, for example: /d/ /o/ /g/ to make 'dog' and /a/ /p/ /l/ to make 'apple'.
- b. The teacher can spread out a pack of word cards on the floor. She will ask children to count pebbles corresponding to the number of syllables in each word and place the pebbles next to each word card. The teacher will also ask children to voice out the identified syllables and blend them together to make the word.

7 Illustrative activity 7: Breaking or segmenting a word into its separate sounds

- a. The teacher can speak different words or show pictures and ask children to break the different sounds which make the word.



Questions for the reader

1. How do we, as members, capacitate ourselves to holistically understand the what, why, and how of developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) in order to work effectively and meaningfully with teachers?
2. How do we, as members, capacitate ourselves to holistically understand the what, why, and how of developing sound-letter correspondence (phonics) in order to work effectively and meaningfully with teachers?
3. There is a risk of teaching sounds and letters in a very mechanical, dry, and meaningless fashion instead of integrating them with conversations, rhymes, songs, stories, etc. What is the best way to understand this and communicate it to teachers?



A note on developing sound-letter correspondence (phonics)

A question which greatly troubles English language teachers is how letters of the alphabet should be taught. A better question to ask would be, how to develop letter-sound correspondence (phonics). English has 44 sounds and only 26 letters to represent them. This means that each letter usually corresponds to more than one sound and that there is no one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. For example, the letter 'a' produces different sounds in 'tap', 'car', 'plane', 'ball' and 'sugar'. The sound made by 'a' in 'sugar' is also made by 'u' in 'purse', 'i' in 'bird', 'ir' in 'first', and 'er' in 'her'! In English, the letter names are also different from the corresponding sounds. English has the concept of letter case, which means that there are small letters (abc) and capital letters (ABC).



Figure 59 There are 26 letters in the alphabet used for English. There are separate consonants and vowels.

We generally see in our field contexts that children are first orally familiarized with letter names through drill and practice. These are practised inside the classroom and even in the morning assembly. The letter names are then associated with the printed letter symbols (graphemes). Further drill and practice take place using alphabet charts or blackboard work. There is seldom any work done on developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) which makes the memorization of letters even more meaningless. Many teachers ask children to rote-memorize sound-letter rules and their exceptions, for example, pronunciation of 'ie' and 'ei'. There is no scope of playing with language and its constituent sounds or letters. We have already discussed how children struggle with even oral language familiarity. All these factors make the whole process of reading and writing very tedious. Children remain stuck with letter names and symbols that have no meaning for them.

The above practices are no doubt done with the good intention of helping children read and write English. However, individual letters or sounds have no meaning in

isolation, they take meaning only in the form of words when used in different contexts. Children are, therefore, at the risk of merely parroting letter names without any real understanding of what they are or how they work. Children develop many misconceptions about letters which we commonly hear such as, *badi sunau ya chotti?* (when asked if they know their abc's); it is 'a' but 'a for apple' or 'a for apple, apple *maane seb'* (when asked to identify a letter). Many children are also able to rattle off an ABCD song from memory but are not be able to identify a letter picked from the middle.



Figure 60 These letter cards with pictures for clues can be rearranged to form words that are familiar to children

These problems highlight the importance of developing oral language familiarity in children and working on their awareness of sounds (phonological awareness). Children also need to develop print awareness⁵. All of this contributes to developing reading readiness⁶ which makes a child ready to read. Once this happens, the teacher can begin to introduce the written symbols or letters (graphemes) and connect them to spoken language. Memorizing the letter symbols and letter names becomes a mere

technicality – the teacher can point out the shape of the letter in question and let children know that it is called 'a' or 'b'. She need not teach all the letters alphabetically but can pick and choose a few letters at a time. She can later correspond these to capital letters, again a few at a time, though some advocate that small and capital letters can also be introduced simultaneously, as they occur together in print material. There is no single method to teach letters and the comprehensive literacy framework recommends a contextual and meaningful approach to teaching letters i.e. through familiar words and contexts.



Figure 61 Low-cost material like paper cups and ice-cream sticks can be used to make interesting language games. Here, you see a large selection of words which can be categorized according to clusters of ending sounds/ letters. It is important that such games are played only once children are contextually familiar with words, letters, and sounds.

Children who are developing their awareness of sound-letter correspondence (phonics) will eventually become swift decoders. Teachers can practice high-frequency words (sight words) and use different reading strategies to help children develop fluency in reading (refer to the gradual release of responsibility framework for reading given in section 2.1.2 on Development of Reading Abilities). A fluent

⁵To read more about print awareness, refer to Chapter 1, Footnote 4

⁶To read more about Reading Readiness, refer to Chapter 1, Footnote 5

reader is known to comprehend better. Children at this stage will go through a stage of inventing spellings that are different from the conventional spellings, say, 'jus' or 'joos' for 'juice'. Such attempts are generally dismissed by the teacher who wishes children to quickly produce accurate spellings. However, inventive spellings are not drastically different from the conventional form – they are written as they are spoken (phonetically). They highlight that children are able to associate the spoken and written word and merely need some help in knowing the generally accepted spelling. This is not something to punish rather should be cherished, as it is an important stride in learning to read and write! English spellings and their pronunciations are usually seen as difficult to memorize but once children begin to invent their own spellings, they can be exposed to the conventional spellings through meaningful contexts.



Figure 62 Children who invent spellings can eventually check the conventional forms and correct themselves



A note on building phonological awareness and phonics: An illustration from the Class III NCERT Textbook

Deepu was hiding behind a tree. The moment he heard footsteps, he jumped out and snarled, “Raaaawwrrr! *Main tiger hu. Tumhe kha jaunga!*” Chanchal ran in the opposite direction, pretending to be scared, “Eeeeeee! *Bhaago! Tiger aya!*” Dadi sat and observed the scene silently. She smiled and thought, “*Kabhi chup-chaap akkad-bakkad khelte hain, kabhi bhoot-bhootni ban jaate hain aur ooo-oooo karke ek-dosre ko darate hain, aur aaj tiger!*”

Oh! How we humans love noticing, making, and using sounds! The sounds can be scary (like those made by a ghost or a ferocious tiger), funny (like a burp or a whistle), musical (like a rhyme, song or clapping game) or any of the numerous emotions and feelings we experience as humans. A babbling infant makes a variety of sounds that we interpret and understand. Sounds also come together to form language, which we speak and listen to. This spoken language is also tied to symbols, i.e., a script, to give us written language. And then we have sign language that has no sounds, but still has a systematic script of its own. Such expression of sounds and letters is a remarkable human achievement indeed!

A question then arises: If humans are so naturally capable of noticing, making, and using sounds, **why do we need to explicitly teach the awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) in school?** Taking the English language as an example, the major reasons to teach phonological awareness and phonics that emerge are:

1. Children become familiar with the sounds of English that may not be present in their home language(s). This increases their 'language repertoire' and comfort with using and comprehending spoken English.
2. Reading and writing are human activities, but unlike spoken language, specific literacy instruction is required to read and write. The codes of 'which spoken sounds stand for which written symbols' (phonics) can only be learnt from an experienced sibling, friend, parent, teacher, etc. in both, formal and informal, settings. This is true for any language and not just English!
3. Learning the code of phonics (44 sounds of English and 26 letters) cannot be done in a day or a few days. It needs sustained engagement during the early years of primary schooling. A pre-requisite of developing sound-letter correspondence is familiarity with English language and its sounds.
4. Some children are already familiar with English when they enter class I or they quickly become proficient in it with support at home. A majority of children in our country do not have that privilege and are at a disadvantage. School can thus be the great equaliser, where the teacher needs to prepare differentiated instruction for teaching English to all learners.

The next question that arises is: **how should sounds and letters be taught in primary grades?** It is clear that the most meaningful approach when working with young children is to first help them notice sounds and letters in their environment

and then in other meaningful contexts, like rhymes, stories, topics of talk and conversations, etc.

In this Handbook, we have innumerable activities for developing various aspects of phonological awareness and phonics. This write-up brings it all together in the form of a cohesive illustration of a classroom, where a teacher works on sounds and letters in a sustained manner.

Let us meet the teacher and the children!

Shankar teaches English at the primary stage in an upper primary school of Udham Singh Nagar district in Uttarakhand. This section illustrates his experiences of working on phonological awareness and phonics in class III, though he modifies and uses similar practices in other primary grades as well, based on factors such as children's proficiency in English, their overall language abilities, age/cognitive development, interest areas, etc.

Class III has 32 children who are all very enthusiastic and energetic. Based on the Learning Outcomes given by NCERT, **Shankar broadly knows that a majority of children in his class are below the grade-appropriate levels of learning when it comes to English. Out of these, about 8-10 of the children are still developing familiarity with the script and are at a very initial level when it comes to reading and writing. 10-12 children have established some sound-letter connections and can read and write with a little more independence.** Three-four children do not attend school regularly, and Shankar tries his best to accommodate their needs whenever they arrive in the classroom. The good news is that most children have broken out of their fear and hesitation of using English and are able to comprehend the English spoken by Shankar in class. They have started producing more and more English, both in speech and writing. They actively engage with printed material in their surroundings and notice the nuances of English with help from their teacher.

All of this has been possible because of the sustained comprehensible input Shankar provides in the class. Initially, he focused more on oral exposure to English and introduced the script later, even though children were surrounded by storybooks and other printed material from the very beginning. This rich and meaningful exposure through everyday conversations, rhymes, stories, pictures, TPR (Total Physical Response) activities, word games, bilingual TLMs, etc. encourages children to learn English. Children who are still in their 'silent periods' take the support of gestures and actions to communicate, whereas children who can use a bit of English mix it up with the other language(s) they know. As children's vocabulary and intuitive understanding of the structure of English (mental grammar) grows, their proficiency in English grows too.

Shankar pitches the language activities for this class in such a way that children can work independently and still experience one level of challenge, which is important for their learning. He devotes enough time to whole class activities, so that children are sufficiently prepared for any individual or group tasks. For group work, Shankar always makes mixed-ability groups to enable peer learning, even in his absence. In this illustration, Shankar develops a six-day plan for the poem 'The Balloon Man', Unit V in the NCERT English textbook. The poem is connected to children's daily lives

and experiences of colourful balloons, the market, etc. **The specific work planned for working on phonological awareness and phonics is given below. Shankar plans these activities for about 20-25 minutes of each class. Other elements of language learning from the lesson plan are not highlighted, though they also take place simultaneously.**

First, Shankar selects the Learning Outcomes related to phonological awareness and phonics. He identifies specific letters and sounds and adds a few more Learning Outcomes to the list.

Associated Learning Outcomes (by NCERT, also given on page 27-28)

- Associates words with pictures.
- Recognizes letters and their sounds. (*first and last letters of familiar words; double letters 'll', 'oo' and 'ee', short and long vowel sounds of /oo;/ /b//p/and /s/as initial sounds*)
- Reads print on the classroom walls: words, poems, posters, charts, etc.
- Writes simple words like fan, hen, rat, etc.
- Writes/Types dictation of words/phrases/sentences.

Additional Learning Outcomes (made by the teacher)

- Invents spellings of new words.
- Uses spellings of familiar words to form conventional spellings of new words.
- Makes rhymes/rhyming words orally; matches rhyming words in writing.
- Makes nonsense words, both orally and in writing.
- Repeats tongue twisters or alliterative sentences/lists of words.
- Matches words based on their spellings.
- Breaks words into syllables; identifies the number of syllables in words.
- Spells sound words (onomatopoeia).

Shankar selects the specific letters and sounds to be focussed on after an initial analysis of the poem. He also plans the TLMs required from outside the textbook, and identifies keywords from the poem, as well as other familiar words related to the poem (vocabulary), etc.

Class III NCERT English Textbook Unit V: The Balloon Man (<i>poem</i>)	
Activity	Content/Process
1. Keywords from the poem	market, balloon, lunch, cart, shine, string, wind, sail, pretty, bunch, sunny...
2. Keywords from outside the poem	names of colours, types of vegetables, type of shops, types of toys, friends...

Class III NCERT English Textbook Unit V: The Balloon Man (<i>poem</i>)	
Activity	Content/Process
3. Possible new vocabulary	square, bunch, tug, day, small...
4. Target sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhyming words: days-stays, bunch-lunch, etc. • Short and long vowel sounds of /oo/ • b//p/and /s/as initial sounds
5. Target letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First and last letters of familiar words • b', 'p' and 's' • Double letters 'll', 'oo' and 'ee'
6. Supplementary TLM from outside the textbook	A colourful and detailed picture of a market scene familiar to learners. It accurately captures the sights, smells and sounds mentioned in the poem.

Here is a short day-wise description of the work done by Shankar and his class III children on phonological awareness and phonics:

Day 1 (Reading a big picture and inventing spellings!)

Shankar brings a big, colourful picture to the class and the children are immediately excited. “Ye kya photo hai sir? Dhikhao na!” children ask him, beaming with excitement. Shankar asks the children to wait as he writes 'Keep smiling!' on the board. Everyone reads it aloud with big grins on their faces. This is a daily routine in Shankar's class.

Shankar holds up the picture in front of the class. The children look in awe at how beautiful it is. Picture reading is a routine exercise in this class and children enjoy it a lot. Shankar asks, “So, tell me, ye scene kahaan ka hoga?” There is a wonderful cacophony of responses: *bazaar, sabzi mandi*, market... He asks then, “What all can you see in this market? Look at the picture carefully. One girl says “cycle, tarbooz.” Another says “banana, fish, balloon, ball”... Like this, there are a number of words in the air that Shankar simultaneously writes down on the board. He writes the Hindi words in the Roman script, as seen above. “Accha. Toh aap kabhi market gaye ho?” Shankar asks. Almost all hands go up as a yes. He asks further, “Tell me, market mein kya-kya dekha? Kya kuch buy kiya aapne? Did you buy anything? Agar aap is market mein jaate toh kya buy karte? One boy says “dukaan dekhi, ice-cream buy kiya!” A girl says, “Main is market mein hoti toh bahut saare balloons kharidti.” Similarly, all the children share their experiences of going to the market, what they bought, whom they accompanied, etc.

Shankar also takes part in the discussion and shares his experiences of passing through the market on his way home. He writes all the words on the board and takes the help of children in spelling out the words – both familiar and unfamiliar words. Children try to 'guess spell' or 'invent' the spellings of these new words with Shankar's help, based on similar words they already know how to spell. For

example, when children find it difficult to spell the new word 'chicks' (that they learn means '*choozay*'), Shankar speaks out the word 'chocolate' and asks children to think of how the first sound is spelled. The children immediately pick up the analogy and say "C, H... X?" Shankar provides further support by writing the familiar word 'kicks' on the board and asks children to see which letters they can borrow from it. I-C-K-S! A few children put it together... C-H-I-C-K-S! After this, they are similarly able to spell 'chicken'!

One by one, the board is filled with words like the following:

balloons, parrot, tree, goat, bananas, *masala*, girl, boy, shops, cycle, turban, children, cow, hen, vegetables, green, red, blue, pink, yellow, play, mother, daughter, day, clothes, ice cream, cart, fruit, apple, toys, spices, cat, chicks, chicken, kite, watermelon, man, fish, woman, people, big, small...



Figure 63 A detailed big picture makes for interesting picture reading!

Shankar then plays a word pointing game. He reads a word from the board and asks children to identify where the word is written. He also plays the game the other way around, by pointing at a word and asking children to identify it. At the end of the class, Shankar pastes the big picture on the classroom wall for everyone to touch and see. He announces that everyone is free to write the names of the things they discussed in class today in their notebooks. Children happily run towards the picture and look for more interesting things they may have missed out earlier.

Day 2 (Poem recitation and double letters!)

Shankar enters the class and sees children talking about the big picture pasted on the wall. He overhears a child elaborately describe what she will do if she goes to this particular market. Once everyone settles down, Shankar announces, "Let us recite a poem. Do you want to?" Everyone immediately stands up. Shankar recites the first four lines with appropriate gestures and an expressive voice. Children repeat after him, but add their own actions, till at last everyone catches the rhythm.

Everyone takes a break from recitation. Shankar turns to the poem in his textbook.

He shows the picture around and children open their textbooks too. Children quickly read the title 'The Balloon Man', as they remember these words from their recitation. Everyone reads the poem together and talks about what is happening in it. Shankar asks interesting questions, and the children are given the opportunity to ask questions too.

After a while, Shankar points out and circles a few words in his textbook like 'balloon' and 'green'. He asks children to tell him what makes these words SPECIAL! Children point out the first letters of the words and start talking about green balloons, so Shankar probes further. A child points out that there are two o's and l's in 'balloon'. This prompts others to say how there are two e's in 'green'. Shankar asks the children to look for more such words from the textbook and write them on the board. A few children go beyond the textbook and hunt for double letter words from the word walls and charts. In the beginning, some children write words where the same letter occurs twice in a word, but they are not together, for example, 'pipe' and 'bindi'. Shankar once again says that the double letters should be together and that there should be no other letter in between them. Soon, children put together a list of many double letter words on the board like 'apple', 'yellow', 'book', 'three', 'tree', 'doggy', 'ball', 'door', 'egg', 'happy', 'free', 'dress', 'teeth', 'letter', 'class', 'school' and 'wall'. Shankar clicks a picture of the board and decides to make some TLM using these words next week with the help of the children.

In the last 15 minutes, Shankar plays a game of identifying all the words with a particular double letter. He challenges children to ask him the same question and pretends that he is not able to find the words so that the children get exasperated and try to help him out. As all the words are known to children, Shankar takes this opportunity to point out how the same double letters make different sounds, for example, o's in 'door' and 'school'. He asks children to identify more such words from the board. When no one is able to find any more examples, Shankar says that they should keep looking and make a record of such magical words on an A4 sheet that he later sticks on the wall. That is what makes words magical!

Day 3 (Making balloons and rhymes!)

Today, Shankar has a double English period, so he has prepared accordingly. He pastes a chart of the poem on the classroom wall at the children's eye level. He has made the same picture given in the textbook, but the man does not have any balloons! "Where are the balloons?" he asks. "Oh! Sir! *Aapne balloons nahi banae!*" the children lament. "Don't worry," says Shankar, "we will make lots of balloons for the balloon man." Shankar hands out balloon-shaped cut-outs (half an A4 sheet) to each child and brings out a carton full of broken crayons from the shelf. In less than 5 minutes, all the



Figure 64 Children make balloon cut-outs for the balloon man

children have coloured their balloons. Shankar helps them stick the paper balloons to the chart using glue. Everyone gleefully admires the colourful chart. “On Friday, *main sabke liye* real balloons *launga* and we will play a very interesting game, ok?” declares Shankar. The class goes gaga!

Once everyone settles down, Shankar trails his finger across the printed words and the children energetically and animatedly repeat each line of the poem after him. After a few trials, everyone recites together. Some lines are more difficult than others, but they manage with each other's help.

When the children have become familiar with the rhythm and flow of the poem, Shankar circles the word 'green' in stanza 2. He asks children if they can see any other word in the stanza that looks similar in spelling. One boy points to the word 'between', saying that it also has two letter e's. Shankar enunciates the words and asks the children to repeat after him. He circles more words like 'bunch', 'day' and 'sky' (one by one) and asks children to identify words that sound the same. Children are already familiar with this concept from an earlier class, though they are not familiar with the term 'rhyming' yet.

A few children find it difficult to find the rhyming word for 'sky' because it is 'high', and they both have different spellings. So far, children are finding rhyming words by closely looking at the spellings. Shankar takes this opportunity to point out that, sometimes, words sound similar, but have different spellings. He asks children if they know more words that rhyme with these words and encourages them to share words from their own languages or even simply make 'nonsense words'. Here are some words children enjoy sharing that Shankar writes on the board:

green: been, teen, mean, jean, (one girl also says her friend's name, Praveen!)

bunch: punch, unch, kunch, funch, munch

day: gay, pay, fay, may, lay, jay, play

sky: my, tie, bye

Shankar does not presently get too worried about spellings. He wants to let children see for themselves how the same sounds can be put down using different letter combinations. He distributes a one-page worksheet of matching rhyming words from the poem. He moves around the classroom to ascertain if anyone needs help, paying close attention to those who are beginning to read and work independently. The children focus on completing their worksheets till the end of the English period and Shankar collects them for including them in the children's portfolios.

Day 4 (Target letters, sounds and a TONGUE TWISTER!)

Everyone recites the poem with actions, some of which have become a 'dancing routine' in the class! A few children have memorised the poem, but Shankar draws attention to the poem chart, nonetheless. After a few recitations, Shankar divides the whole class into 3 groups. Each group gets a letter ('b', 'p' or 's'). They must list all the words in the poem that start with this letter by looking at their textbooks and copy each word onto a blank card. These are mixed groups, so children help each other. In each group, a few children locate the words by looking into their textbooks,

one child lists all the words in a notebook, and a few others copy the words onto the blank word cards. Shankar moves from group to group and helps, especially group 's' as they have so many words! Here are the words children list:

Words starting with 'b'	Words starting with 'p'	Words starting with 's'
balloons	purple	square
bunch	people	stays
blue	perhaps	see
between	pretty	shining
big		small
below		string
		some
		shall
		sailing
		stand
		sky

After 15 minutes, Shankar collects all the cards and shuffles them. “*Chalo*, first let us read these words quickly-quickly,” he says. He reads a few words (mainly the new, unfamiliar ones) and makes the children read the more familiar words by showing them the cards. Each time a word is read, the children must clap their hands once. The children clap LOUDLY each time!

After all the words are read and clapped out, Shankar proceeds, “Now I will read a word, but *uski* spelling *nahi dikhaunga*. You show me the first letter!” This way, he also works on /b//p/and /s/as initial sounds. All children take out their own packs of letter cards that they had made some time ago and keep the 'b', 'p' and 's' cards ready. Two girls and one boy did not make their sets, so Shankar hands them spare letter cards he has made. Each time Shankar tells a word, the children pick up the correct letter and hold it up high. They look around at each other and correct themselves, so Shankar does not feel the need to make any corrections.

Shankar ends the day with a tongue twister: *Blow a big bunch of blue balloons!* Children tirelessly repeat the tongue twister as fast they can and fall over each other laughing as they fumble!

Day 5 (Breaking words into syllables!)

The next day, Shankar enters the class and pulls out the same stack of word cards made by children the previous day. He places the cards on the floor and announces, “Time for Word Run!” The children immediately jump up, pick up a card for themselves and run to the poem chart to 'match' it. Shankar then goes around the classroom checking the words matched by the students with cards and asks those who have made incorrect matches to re-check the words they have matched.

Shankar keenly observes all the children and He then gives back the word cards to those who are yet to play, making sure that all children get a chance to match at least 3-4 words. Some children run back several times to match different words. Shankar puts the word cards back on the shelf so that children can play the game any time they want.

Once all the sweaty and breathless children settle down, Shankar plays a 'jaw drop' game of counting syllables. He calls this the 'Breaking Words' game. For this, he once again uses the words from the poem chart. Breaking words into syllables is new for children and they still struggle to identify the right number of syllables for most words, so Shankar makes sure he does some work on syllables using familiar words every 2-3 days. He helps children recall the activity, "*Abhi I will point a word on the poem chart and tell me ki usko kitni baar tod sakte hain. Yaad haina, maine bataya tha ki hum apne jaw ke neeche haath rakhke count kar sakte hain?*" Shankar mimics the jaw dropping action and places his right hand under his jaw. He mainly concentrates on words containing one syllable ('big', 'sky') or two syllables ('balloons', 'purple', 'pretty', 'people'). Although Shankar tells the words and only asks children to do the jaw dropping action, he also gives children the opportunity to find more words for him. These can be any words the children are familiar with, so children pick words from outside the poem, like 'dog', 'handpump', 'mobile' and 'scooter'. A few children pick their own names or the names of their friends. Shankar encourages this, as it proves to be highly effective. Overall, children get the syllables right about 50% of the time, so Shankar knows that they still need more time to practice. He believes that as children get better at identifying the syllables correctly, they will also become much better at reading and spelling. For now, Shankar decides to leave out words that may be too complicated for identifying syllables, although they only contain one syllable, like 'square' and 'bunch'.

Day 6 (Playing with balloons and sound words!)

Shankar asks children to move around and find 5 words (apart from those used in the previous lesson) containing the letters 'b', 'p' and 's' that children practiced the previous day. They can find words from textbooks, storybooks, word walls, word cards and other printed material in the classroom. This time, Shankar says that the letters can occur anywhere in the word, not just in the beginning. Shankar looks closely at the words children select to check if there are words that do not contain any of the three chosen letters. He points out these words and asks children to examine the spellings more closely and then find alternative words if required. Shankar then puts children in pairs and asks them to exchange their notebooks. Children assess each other's words and hand back the notebooks. Some children take a few more minutes to revise and complete their work.

The children all look at Shankar as he goes to his bag and pulls out a packet of colourful balloons. There is a growing murmur of excitement in the air and also a few shrieks! It is time for the fun that was promised many days ago to begin. Shankar distributes the balloons but asks everyone not to immediately inflate them. For the next 10-15 minutes, there is a noisy game of stretching and catapulting the deflated balloons, filling them with air, pinching them, releasing them so that they go whizzing around the classroom and, finally, bursting them. A few children pick up

the rubbery remnants of the burst balloons and blow smaller balloons with their mouths. Shankar pulls out a few remaining balloons from the packet and everyone runs to the handpump to fill them with water and fling them at each other, bursting them like it is Holi! After a good deal of frivolity, everyone comes back inside.

Shankar asks all the children to pick up a piece of chalk each and write down sound words (onomatopoeic words) to describe the sound made by the balloons (onomatopoeic words) when they burst. He begins with this sound because it is the easiest way to start the activity. Soon, the board is filled with words like *boom, fssh, poon, phut, phat, badoom, badaam*, etc. Shankar has always noticed that children love writing down such words because they do not have to worry about the 'proper' spellings. Some children get so involved in the activity that they go on adding a number of o's, a's and e's to their sounds to make *boooooom, blaaaaaam*, etc. The first time Shankar tried this activity was when it rained very hard. He had asked children to tell him the sounds made by the leaves when the wind blows through them. That day too, there were many beautiful words on the board. A chart of those words can still be seen in a corner of the classroom.

The activity continues and Shankar draws the children's attention to all the sounds made by the balloons that day. A plethora of words like *cheeee, kich-kich, chik, cheeeek, phurrrr, phaaarr, zaaarr*, etc. are added to the list. Shankar notes today that even those children who are not very good at remembering the conventional spellings of words are slowly improving at representing sound-letter connections. There is a great degree of correspondence between the words children speak out and the words they attempt to write. Shankar plans to help children invent their own spellings of not just onomatopoeic words, but other types of words as well. After all, children can always check the conventional spellings by looking at the word walls, textbooks, or the innumerable other printed material in the classroom!

Some principles to keep in mind:

Adapted from Yopp & Yopp 2000, as cited in ELI Handout 5

1. Phonological awareness instruction should focus on identifying and manipulating bigger units of sounds before moving to the smaller units.
2. The majority of phonological awareness activities for young children should have body movements such as clapping, jumping etc.
3. Activities for older children (6-8 years) can incorporate letters. They target both phonological awareness and phonics and help in learning to decode the script and read.

Phonological awareness activities should be fun and quick, done a couple of times a day as part of the classroom routine and need not take longer than 15-20 minutes in total.

In a Nutshell

In this illustration, you see how a teacher develops children's awareness of phonological awareness and phonics in a sustained manner using content from the

prescribed textbook. The teacher does not rush to teach all the sounds and letters at one go. He does not stuff his lesson plan with isolated activities. Instead, he gives sufficient time for children to notice patterns of sound and letter combinations in speech and writing by surrounding them with meaningful opportunities to learn English in a print-rich classroom. When children notice 'exceptions' in these patterns, the teacher introduces them as interesting nuances of language and encourages children to find more evidence from words they know, not just in English but their own languages too! We can say that the teacher has successfully sparked the children's interest in sounds and letters so that they play with language with increasing independence. As the teacher, he plays with children too but knows when to take a step back so that children learn from each other and by themselves. All these efforts by the teacher infuse his children with unending confidence, even when they are not very proficient in English, YET!



Essential reading

- ELI Handout 5: *Supporting Phonological Awareness in Pre-Primary and Primary Classrooms (2019)*
 - *Supporting Phonemic Awareness Development in the Classroom* by Hallie Kay Yopp and Ruth Helen Yopp (The Reading Teacher, October 2000)
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Illustrative activities for developing sound-letter correspondence (phonics)

Associated Learning Outcomes

- Reads print on the classroom walls: words, poems, posters, charts, etc.
- Recognizes letters and their sounds (a-z)
- Differentiates between small (a-z) and capital letters (A-Z) in print
- Produces words with common blends like “br” “fr” like 'brother', 'frog', etc.
- Writes simple words like fan, hen, rat, etc.
- Writes/types dictation of words/phrases/sentences.

Important precursors to developing sound-letter correspondence (phonics) have already been discussed above. These contribute to reading readiness where the child is ready to read. They can be listed as follows:

1. Oral familiarity with the language (rich vocabulary)
2. Awareness of sounds (phonological awareness)
3. Print awareness

Here are a few ways to introduce letter symbols and names after children have developed awareness of sounds (phonological awareness)–

- The teacher can introduce the corresponding letter symbols and names using all the illustrative activities given above which will now help in developing sound-letter correspondence (phonics). She can begin to use the blackboard or word and letter cards to supplement her work for this purpose.
- The teacher can use words printed in the classroom or written on the blackboard to point to a letter and introduce its name. She can ask children to identify similar letters used in other words.
- Slowly, the teacher can have focused practice on developing sound-letter correspondence through shared reading using big books and story charts. While finger-pointing was initially used to develop an awareness of words, the teacher can now focus on selected words and their spellings. Here too, she can work on specific letters and their corresponding sounds. It is also important for children to extensively read at this point, which can be achieved through active Reading Corners containing a lot of storybooks, magazines, etc.
- Phonic blends of consonants and letters are important as they are not just single letters but clusters of letters. The teacher can choose common phonic blends, like 'br' and 'ch', using interesting contexts like rhymes and stories. Just as knowing whole words is important, knowing phonic blends, collocations, and high-frequency words (sight words) is also important. Knowing these speeds up the process of reading as children focus on the entire cluster of letters or words instead of the individual letter.

Practising letters

The teacher can play a number of letter games like identifying, matching, sorting, finding the missing letter, etc. to further enrich alphabetic knowledge. This can be done by using the blackboard, letter cards, and print in the form of charts and books.

Let us look at a few such activities. Please note, these are activities to practise letters, not to introduce them. The teacher must gradually introduce these activities as children become more and more comfortable with letter names in context.

1 Illustrative activity 1: Using word cards or words printed in books, on blackboard or classroom walls

- Look at the word and identify the first/last letter.
- Circle or underline the given letter in the chart.
- How many letters are there in this word?
- Find two words beginning/ending with the same letter.
- Find words where a letter is repeated twice (can be together, like in, 'book' and 'balloon' or apart like in 'colour' and 'potato').
- Pick two words with only one vowel, like 'boy' and 'girl'.
- Pick two words with two consonants together, such as 'spring' and 'bottle'.

2 Illustrative activity 2: Using letter cards

- Arrange the letters in alphabetical order.
- Build your name or your friend's name.
- Spell the spoken words.
- Use the given letters to make as many words as you can, for example, 'pet', 'cut', 'rope', and 'mop' using 'computer'.
- Match small and capital letter cards.
- Find the missing letter card.
- Pick any three cards and put them in alphabetical order.



Figure 65 Sound-letter predictions help spell unfamiliar words. Letter cards can be arranged and re-arranged easily.

3 Illustrative activity 3: Some other games

- Letter BINGO/Tambola: Each child gets a grid of random letters. The teacher picks out letters and children have to find it in their grids and strike it out. Those who strike out a line of letters (either horizontally or vertically) or the entire grid, win the game. Alternatively, there can be words in the grid and children have to strike out the words based on their first/last letters.
- The teacher points to an object in the classroom and children have to write the letter with which the word (name of the object) begins.
- Spell the words spoken by the teacher.
- Make a chain of words using the last letter of the word spoken.



Questions for the reader

1. Should letters be introduced only after children develop mastery over phonemic awareness?
2. How can the teacher maintain a balance between teaching letters in context and in isolation?

2.2.6 CP 6. Establishing Reading Corners

Importance of a Reading Corner in English language learning

A classroom library, or a reading corner, well-stocked with children's books for students to browse and read on their own, is a great space to have in the classroom. The books corner can be started with a few books and enriched through donation or collection of money by the teachers of the school and the visitors. Care should be taken to include a good variety, in terms of genres, themes, illustrations and text length, in the collection. Besides, selection of books should be based on our observation of what children like engaging with - probably, stories from the world of nature and animals, of the life they are familiar with, having simple and short text along with colourful and expressive illustrations. And above all, children should be allowed and encouraged to spend some time with these books every day.

Apart from the above, the teacher can use a variety of techniques of reading for the purpose of helping children with decoding and understanding of the text. One such technique is - which should also be the first thing to be done with the storybooks - **reading the story** to the children by making them sit in a circle and drawing their attention to the picture and the text through finger-pointing. This helps in giving them a good idea about the storyline and some nuances of the story. The next reading should involve a conversation/leading questions to make them understand the entire story through guesswork.

In addition to the above, children require practice in decoding/quick word-recognition and meaning-making through opportunities to independently read in small groups. Techniques like **echo reading**, where the teacher reads a sentence which children repeat after her, gives them practice in reading with fluency with the help of the knowledge of how a particular word is pronounced. The other technique, **shared reading**, which involves reading of a longish text together by the teacher and the students one by one, also serves as a good reading practice opportunity and leads to the development of fluency in reading.



Figure 66 A library under lock and key is no one's friend!

In case of the textbook lesson, these techniques can be used through the **workstation model** (illustrated below) wherein students are involved in multiple reading of the text and thus, helped to grow into independent readers and writers. In many primary and even middle schools, students are not able to decode or quickly recognize the words to read fluently. This happens because apart from little exposure to oral language, teachers neither give a loud reading of the lessons nor

involve each one of the students in reading aloud. Therefore, they don't know how to utter most of the words in a lesson.

The suggested process involves multiple readings of the textbook lessons using different reading techniques - echo reading, shared reading, silent reading and individual work on the lessons. Given below is the idea of workstations through the following steps:

1. The teacher introduces the lesson to the class through a brief conversation on its theme and by writing a few keywords from the topic on the blackboard.
2. She reads aloud the first two paragraphs of the lesson, reading one sentence in at a time with adequate pauses and voice modulation.
3. Students follow her by moving their finger/pencil through each word being read.
4. She organizes the class into three groups.
5. Next, she sends the three groups to three of the four workstations created in four corners of the classroom – for echo reading, shared reading (for meaning-making), discussion and writing.
6. The students who have a better proficiency in English are sent to the 'shared reading station' where they read and try to make sense of the two paragraphs read by the teacher.
7. One student who is able to decode the text takes with her six other students who struggle with recognizing words and they sit in the 'echo reading station'. She reads the paragraphs to them, sentence by sentence, which they repeat while putting their pencil on each word being read by her.
8. Associating sounds with letters. She helps them in paying attention to the spellings of the words and in learning to read the text with some fluency.



Figure 67 Children should get the opportunity to share what they have read

9. After making them read the first two paragraphs, she sends them to the 'echo reading station' and invites the students in the 'shared reading station' to discuss with her what they have understood or could not understand in the text.
10. When the students in the 'shared reading station' move to the 'discussion station', students who have been trying to decode the text in the 'echo reading station' move to 'shared reading station' and do another round of reading of the two paragraphs to understand them.
11. The students who were initially with the teacher move to the 'echo reading station' and practice decoding the text, whereas those who joined the teacher later for discussing the meaning, now move to the 'writing station' where they try and do the first few questions of the textual exercises.



List of desired teaching sub-practices for establishing Reading Corners.

In an effective classroom, the teacher:

- 6.1. Establishes a rich and accessible Reading Corner containing age-appropriate, contextual, and interesting material for children (apart from the prescribed textbooks) so that they develop their awareness of print and practice reading in general.
- 6.2. Creates specific opportunities for children to share what they have read and carries the conversation forward by asking a mix of comprehension and inferential questions (over time, in classes IV and V, the questions become more critical and the use of language also becomes more complex).
- 6.3. Plans dedicated slots in the timetable for children to engage with the Reading Corner through storytelling, read-alouds, free reading and sharing, etc.
- 6.4. Connects conversations and resources from the Reading Corner to the content of the textbooks, such as for planned reading and writing tasks.
- 6.5. Takes the support of material from the Reading Corner to create multiple opportunities for assessing reading (from identifying words to independent reading).
- 6.6. Takes the support of material from the Reading Corner to create multiple opportunities for assessing writing (from drawing and scribbling to independent writing).
- 6.7. Assesses the children's interaction with the material to further develop the Reading Corner.

Part 2: Developing Language Stage



Figure 68 When children conduct their own read-aloud sessions, they gain confidence and an affinity to reading.

In this section, we will focus on the Developing Language Stage in which children are prepared to use English for academic purposes as well. Their expression skills (both oral and written) are further developed using a variety of spoken and written inputs which become increasingly complex, both in terms of language and ideas. The learning outcomes of the Developing Language Stage are a natural progression from the earlier stage. It is of

utmost importance to understand this progression as language learning takes place in a continuum where different dimensions of the same skills are acquired. A child's ability to use language for academic purposes is further built in later years of schooling and in higher education too.

2.3 Development Areas in Developing Language Stage

2.3.1 Development of academic language skills (oral and written)



Figure 69 There is no single story! Story cards can be arranged and re-arranged to make a variety of stories!

Academic language skills are those skills which help children comprehend and learn better in academic programs like schooling. They support the development of higher-order thinking skills and the learning of other school subjects like Mathematics and Science. Good communication skills are the backbone of developing academic language skills. Some examples of academic language skills are, summarizing (orally or in a written form), comparing and contrasting the information provided in texts, categorizing the provided

information, looking for relevant information from authentic texts, etc. These skills not only make learners proficient in written use of language but also its oral use.

2.3.2 Creative expression (oral and written)

In the Developing Language Stage, children begin to explore the possibilities of expressing their thoughts and ideas in a language that is more creative, both orally and in written form. An important point to note is that attempts at creative expression are possible even with inaccurate and imperfect use of language, as long as the learner has expressive vocabulary and is confident and unhesitant to use the language fluently. The language exposure the teacher provides (through a variety of spoken and written inputs) and the creative and imaginative tasks she designs are of utmost importance in developing creative expression in children. It is unrealistic to expect children to use English expressively if they get little to no language exposure and scant opportunities to express themselves in the first place.



Figure 70 Small projects like making greeting cards and posters help children see the utility of written language in their lives. This is especially important for English, as young learners may often struggle with the question – why do I have to learn English? These formats of writing also have immense scope for creative use of language.

2.3.3 Reading strategies for more complex texts

The skill of reading may advance from decoding and comprehending words/short sentences to more complex texts in terms of language and content, for example, paragraphs, age-appropriate stories, and articles. The skill of prediction during reading and bringing in one's own thoughts and ideas into the reading of a text may also begin to emerge at this stage, which help children comprehend complex texts more meaningfully. Children are also expected to graduate to independent reading at this stage.

2.3.4 Writing with more coherence

In terms of writing, children are expected to write a little more complex but coherent texts, like brief descriptions of objects, short dialogues, informal letters, short stories, short messages, listing personal likes and dislikes, opinion pieces about characters in a story, etc. through exposure to spoken and written inputs. Even in guided writing, there will be a shift towards more of original writing in the form of expressing opinions, ideas, etc. It is desired that children at this stage begin to write more independently.

BICS and CALP

It may be helpful to have some understanding of the two levels of the ability to use a second language, namely, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

BICS describes the social, conversational language used for oral communication. It is also described as social language. This type of communication offers many cues to the listener as the language is embedded in the context.

CALP refers to the context-reduced language of the academic classroom which is needed for academic learning. CALP deals with skills essential to academics, such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing about relevant subject matter. It is CALP that enables the learner to acquire skills like inferring, classifying, comparing, evaluating and synthesizing language.

It may be useful to keep in mind that teaching the basics of CALP can be initiated in the developing stage (in our field contexts). Going beyond basic language and literacy is the beginning of higher-order language skills which are central to not just learning languages and subject but to living life itself.

You can read more about BICS and CALP in the Position Paper on Teaching of English (NCERT, 2006).



Essential reading

Teaching Reading and Developing Literacy: Contrasting Perspectives by Constance Weaver in Reading Process and Practice (1988/2002)

2.4 Desired Classroom Practices for Developing Language Stage

In the present scenario, reading and writing seem to be the most challenging tasks which require rigorous and continuous efforts by both, teachers and learners. Often, teachers complain that children are not ready to read and write despite their best efforts. The reality is that children usually do not get enough opportunities to meaningfully explore the processes of reading and writing in school. We will look at 4 broad categories of activities. They illustrate how a few good resources can create a number of interesting opportunities for reading and writing in learners during the Developing Language Stage.

- I. **Integrated-skills activities:** These are more complex language tasks with specific components for developing all the language skills together. They are meant to help children start constructing knowledge through English, use English for oral and written expression, and develop their academic knowledge using a variety of spoken and written inputs by the teacher.
- II. **Vocabulary-based exercises:** These exercises on certain themes/ topics/ contexts provide learners with the opportunity to carefully look at words and observe patterns in spellings and their corresponding sounds (or vice-versa).
- III. **Language across curriculum:** Unlike subjects like Mathematics and EVS, language has the benefit of having no specific content. Therefore, a language teacher should make the best possible use of content from subjects. This exposes learners to a variety of texts and also makes them develop higher-order skills by doing a variety of language tasks, like conducting a survey or an interview.
- IV. **Storytelling:** Stories are integral to learning and will continue in this stage. The type of stories, characters, plot, associated questions/ activities, etc. will become more complex compared to the earlier stage.

Now, let us look at these in detail along with the illustrative activities for each.



Essential reading

Helping Children Become Readers by R. Amritavalli (2012) in Language and Language Teaching Volume 1 Number 1

Illustrative activities for Developing Language Stage

2.4.1 Integrated-skills activities

As the name suggests, integrated skills activities are more complex language tasks with specific components for developing all the language skills together. They are meant to help children start constructing knowledge through English, use English for oral and written expression, and develop their academic knowledge using a variety of spoken and written inputs by the teacher. Some common integrated skills activities are – developing stories based on pictures, storyboarding, developing projects, reading storybooks for review and sharing, maintaining a class or school newspaper, designing a role-play or skit for the morning assembly, etc. Some of these are illustrated below. For the success of such activities, it is almost imperative that children are immersed in a language-rich environment with access to resources, such as a Reading Corner. Therefore, the illustrations below also give ideas for developing such an environment. The teacher must be present every step of the way to support the learners and scaffold their use of English. This will vary from learner to learner, especially at this stage. If the classroom processes are planned imaginatively, they can go a long way to help children learn and take interest in other subjects taught in English. Children may also begin to take a keen interest in using English for creative expression.



Figure 71 Advances learners can use newspapers for language projects like captioning a picture, summarising an article, categorising news, etc.

1 Illustrative activity 1: 'Limited reading' of storybooks

Guessing and predicting what is about to happen 'next' are some of the most essential strategies of reading. These are developed when children are given multiple opportunities to do so, either before reading the story or while reading it. A good reader will use clues available in the text or supporting pictures to make guesses and predictions. In this stage, the teacher can use more complex stories with twists or unexpected endings to tickle the imagination of children, develop their interest in reading, and compel them to pay more attention to textual clues.

Skills in focus: Reading a story; skimming/glancing; guessing the missing pieces of the story using available information; creating sequences of a story.

Process: The teacher brings a lot of storybooks to the classroom or takes children to the Reading Corner. She makes them skim through their choice of storybooks and gives them enough time to do so. She then talks to the children about the pictures, words, and phrases they could read and the

connections they could see among them. Through conversation, this limited reading is developed into a storyline (main thread of the story) and finally woven into a full-fledged story. The teacher writes this story on the blackboard in English or using mixed language as exposure to modelled writing. She then uses the story for a read-aloud session, followed by shared/independent reading by the children. The teacher later makes a story chart and displays it in the classroom so that children can go back to it whenever they want and read in groups or individually. Later, she gives a guided-writing task in the form of a story outline with accompanying picture(s) and helps children write their own stories. These are subsequently read out by the children in the class. Two stories are selected for reading in the morning assembly. This entire process takes a week's time and significantly boosts the children's interest in reading more storybooks to write their own stories. The teacher plans to buy more storybooks for her personal collection and share them with her children from time to time.

2 Illustrative activity 2 : Creating storyboards

We often feel that activities like drawing and colouring are limited to the Early Language Stage and only help develop emergent writing and oral expression, but this could not be farther from the truth. Drawing is a powerful medium of expression even in itself and facilitates language development when coupled with writing, which children are able to do with more ease in the Developing Language Stage. Creating a storyboard is one such opportunity. Storyboards are a form of graphic organizers where the main events of the story are put in the form of visuals. Storyboards can be considered as simple comic strips with key dialogues. Developing storyboards helps children take an interest in the story. If the story is stopped at a point, children can take their storyboards further with their interpretations of the story ending. This also makes them curious about the 'original' version of the story and how their story fares compared to it.



Figure 72 A storyboard panel

Skills in focus: Listening to an English story and making sense of the main idea; collectively creating a story based on some hints; representing a story in drawings/pictures; creating dialogues for different characters.

Process: The teacher tells or reads a story entirely in English. She puts the children in small groups and asks them to create storyboards on chart papers. As a result, the same story will have multiple visual interpretations put up in the classroom. The teacher helps her students plan their

storyboard panels by selecting the key scenes from the story and discussing how these can be visually represented. She asks questions to help children figure out the key characters of the story and write their dialogues. The children complete their storyboards and stick them on the classroom walls. The



Figure 73 A storyboard panel

teacher gives enough time for each group to move around the class and take a look at the different storyboards. She brings them all together and talks about each group's work by asking further questions – Which storyboard best represents the story? What did you miss adding in your storyboard? Is there any storyboard which has changed the story? Do you like the changed story? Which storyboard do you like the most and why? The whole activity from beginning to end takes place over a few English classes. The teacher is happy because she has the option of using these storyboards for developing a small skit, writing further dialogues, and writing more stories using the same theme or characters. Her mind buzzes with ideas!

3 Illustrative activity 3: Reading for information

One of the most common misconceptions in the minds of English teachers is that the child needs to understand the meaning of each word in order to comprehend the overall meaning of the text. However, the fact is that every reader uses whatever she has understood from the text to fill in the gaps and guess what is unfamiliar or yet to be understood. Labouring with such texts is also a key to developing reading skills in children. However, the texts should not be too hard, but rather should pose an adequate degree of challenge, mitigated by the teacher's support whenever required.

Skills under focus: Reading to know; retaining in the mind many pieces of information; organising information in mind and sharing that orally or in a written form.

Process: The teacher puts the children in small groups and gives each group the descriptions of a few familiar birds and animals in English. To aid comprehension, she has added pictures to each description. Each group gets one entire class to go through the descriptions. In the next English class, each group shares the new information they have received through their reading of the factual pieces given to them.



Figure 74 Authentic material like posters and hoardings surround us, and are excellent sources for reading for information.

A sample factual piece about hummingbirds:

Hummingbirds are the smallest migrating birds. They don't migrate in flocks like other species, and they typically travel alone for up to 500 miles at a time. The name 'Hummingbird' comes from the humming noise their wings make, as they beat very fast. Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly backwards. Hummingbirds have no sense of smell, but they have a good colour vision. Some birds like the Ruby-throated Hummingbird prefer orange or red flowers. Many people mix sugar and water to make nectar and put it in feeders. But red dye should not be added to the mixture as it could harm the birds.

The teacher then selects a mix of familiar and unfamiliar words/phrases from the description provided to the hummingbird group; words/phrases like 'migrating birds', 'travel', 'wings', 'fly', 'sense', 'colour vision', 'nectar', and 'feeders'. She then gives each group a blank sheet of paper and asks them to draw an imaginary animal or bird and describe it in a few sentences using the given words. The drawing sheets are exhibited on the walls of the classroom and children from other classes are invited to come and see the exhibition.

4 Illustrative activity 4: Letter-writing as a free writing task

Engaging children in activities that involve a challenge or personal interest, like writing to somebody they like very much, goes a long way as they are trained to think and write on their own from the very beginning of their literate lives. A personal touch or element of belonging is a crucial motivator



Figure 75 Authentic writing tasks like writing and posting letters personalises writing and makes it more meaningful.

to write. Writing in English can begin with writing in their own language(s) that can be reworked with the teacher's support. However, the reworking should not be done in the form of mere translation but in a way that helps children weave English into their own writing in future.

Skills in focus: Putting in writing what you wish to say; to talk about people and their traits; using a few English phrases/describing words to talk about the people.

Process: The teacher asks children to write a letter to their best friend in English or mixed language, telling them about something exciting that happened recently, for example, a visit to another school for a competition or a family wedding. The teacher lets children write for the entire English class. In the next class, she asks children to read their letters one by one. The teacher also takes part in the reading and discussion. Later, the children go back to their seats and the teacher involves them in an analysis of the letters to extract some words and expressions. She writes these on the blackboard and asks children to form more sentences. This will provide children with an opportunity to speak English in a controlled environment which goes a long way in boosting the confidence of new learners of English. The teacher asks the children to give their letters to their friends and share their experiences in the next class.

5 Illustrative activity 5: Neighbourhood survey to make a magazine

Giving children slightly longish tasks that involve drawing, writing, and discussion ensures their complete involvement and also prepares them for tasks which may require more time and patience. We have already discussed the importance of drawing and how it helps children conceptualize their ideas visually. Drawing and talking about familiar places gives substantial content in the form of concrete experiences which can be

written down with the teacher's help. Compiling such shared experiences for a small magazine or newspaper that can be photocopied or periodically made with minimal resources gives children an immense sense of audience. The fact that someone would like to read a factual piece or a story from their life that they have written stimulates the desire to write more coherently and correctly without being pushed by the teacher.

Skills in focus: Representing ideas about a place in drawings; learning English vocabulary for describing places; labelling and reading; talking about somebody else's work.

Process: The teacher puts children in small groups and assigns each of them a locality from their neighbourhood/ village. She asks them to talk about their assigned locality on the basis of questions, like what the locality looks like, who and what all they see there, do they like it, what they enjoy doing there, and how would they like to improve it, etc. The children first talk among themselves and then, share their discussions with the rest of the class. As home assignment, the teacher asks the children to visit their assigned locality and observe as many details as they can. The next day, the teacher hands out blank sheets of paper and asks each group to draw their respective localities. She helps them write down in English whatever they had discussed the previous day. She asks them to give a suitable heading to their piece and write the names of group members at the bottom, along with the date of writing. Once each group completes their work, the teacher asks them to exchange their sheets with one another for discussion. Everyone sees each other's drawings and talks about what they have written. The teacher finally compiles all sheets in the form of a spiral-bound



Figure 76 Drawing tasks can become more complex such as storyboarding, map making, designing story charts, and concept maps.

book. She uses some money from the common fund collected by the school teachers to get photocopies of the magazine for the Reading Corners that she has made in other classes too. The teacher encourages other students to read this magazine in their free time and think of their own magazine ideas. She also thinks about gifting a copy to the village *sarpanch*, other important members of the community or even to parents and guests of honour during the celebration of important days. She thinks it would be a good idea to approach a school patron for funding the expense...

6 Illustrative activity 6: Writing a diary entry

Imaginative writing tasks interest children a great deal and motivate them to write more. The potential of such tasks is maximized when the teacher scaffolds them with conversations and writes the conversations down as part of modelled writing. Such models of writing like stories, dialogues, diary entries, etc. help children visualize how they can frame their own writing. They can then be asked to write on their own using as much English as they can, with the support of their home language(s). Autonomy is a crucial ingredient to develop the writing skills and confidence of budding writers. It is also very important that children carefully read what their peers have written and give each other feedback. The initial feedback may be guided by simple questions, such as: How did the writing make you feel? Which word/phrase did you like the most? It can subsequently become more nuanced to mirror the feedback given by the teacher. This culture of reading and commenting on each other's work promotes learning from each other and develops evaluation skills too.

Skills in focus: Learning to write a diary entry; learning from model pieces; reading different things at a time; forming and expressing opinions about fellow students' works.

Process: The teacher writes the following diary entry of a goat on the blackboard –

June 20th, 2000

Dear diary,

I am overjoyed! It was so warm and sunny today. Winters are finally over! But something silly happened in the morning. I was happily playing with my kids in the grass. Suddenly, a crow flew down from the sky and pecked me on my head. I raaan after the crow to shoo it away, but it flew back. Peck! Peck! Ouch! Ouch! I raaan after the crow AGAIN! Peck! Peck! Peck! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! By then I was very angry. I bent down, lowered my head, and charged at the big, black crow. Caw! Caw! Guess what? I fell into the bushes! Now I have a babool branch stuck in my horns. What should I do?

The teacher then asks children to identify the animal and point out the specific words/phrases which helped them arrive at their answer. She points out to the use of language in the diary entry by discussing specific

examples. She also talks to children about the format of a diary entry and what we mean when we say, 'Dear diary'. The teacher then pairs the children and asks them to collaboratively write a diary entry on behalf of their favourite animal. She scaffolds the writing experience by talking to children about how different animals might usually spend their day. She writes down key words/phrases from the conversation on the blackboard and encourages children to use these to write. She also checks up on each pair from time to time. The children complete their work and read out their diary entries one by one. The teacher pastes all the sheets on the wall and encourages the children to go around and write their feedback using a bit of English.

7 Illustrative activity 7: Project-type learning tasks

Tasks like projects are extremely popular for children of all age groups as they cover a range of skills, like collecting and organizing information, presenting and demonstrating, designing, etc. Such skills are usually at the risk of being ignored, especially in the primary schools of our country as a whole. Projects also encourage children to seek the support of different sources, many of which they may be using for the first time, for example, an encyclopaedia or a thesaurus. The teacher is also challenged to design innovative projects and provide the requisite resources for their fulfilment. Projects are also done over an extended period of time; they are not quick to do. This helps children see the interconnections among the smaller tasks they do, which ultimately lead to the successful completion of the project. Group projects promote cooperation and teamwork. Working on projects almost inevitably integrates different subjects as well. Some examples of projects are—collecting, organizing, and presenting information from surroundings; reading and comparing two storybooks about animals; making a collage on a given topic; designing an event plan for the school annual day or sports day, etc. These are also not very resource-intensive. They can be done by interviewing people and reading storybooks and newspapers and with basic provisions of stationery material.



Figure 77 Group projects develop study and referencing skills

Skills in focus: Learning to read texts from different subjects; ability to recognize the difficulties encountered in the process of reading; exploring sources for getting required answers/information; organising information/ understanding and creating presentations; developing studying and referencing skills.

Process: The teacher writes the following sentences about an invention on the board:

This great machine was invented in China. In the beginning, it was made of wood. Later, the wood was replaced by huge iron machines. Many books came out of this machine but the first book that reached the common people was a religious book.

Children discuss what is written with guidance from the teacher. She then asks the children to write down a list of questions which will help them know more about the machine. She can help them draft the questions in English, some of which could be:

- When was the machine invented?
- How big is the machine?
- How was the machine used initially?
- Who was the inventor of the machine?
- Are such machines available in other countries?
- What was the name of the religious book?

The teacher adds her own questions and writes all of these down on the blackboard. Children read all the questions with the teacher's help. She puts them in small groups and gives them the task of collecting information about five more inventions. She gives an outline for organizing the content and lets children know that she will help them print or draw pictures of their inventions. She adds some encyclopaedias to the Reading Corner and also encourages children to search for material online using her mobile phone, the mobile phones of their parents, or the school computer. She also encourages children to seek help from the EVS and Science teachers or the older children in their school. Many days go by and the children take baby steps towards completing their projects. The teacher ensures that all children are involved in the project by re-distributing responsibility or allocating specific tasks to children who are being ignored or side-lined. Some groups have found information for three or four inventions only, but the teacher does not force them to complete all five inventions. One day, all the information is organized and ready on different chart papers. The teacher discusses specific pointers for presenting the projects, for example, how to introduce the different inventions, how to explain how different inventions work, and how to encourage everyone else to ask questions about their inventions. All the groups present their work.

8 Illustrative activity 8: Using comic strips

Comic strips are not only visually appealing but are also quite relatable because of their dialogic form of storytelling. Some comics are sequential while others go back and forth between times and also show the points of view of different characters. There are comics for every age group! Appealing characters and settings add value to comics and make them more

fun to read for children. Wordless comic strips or those with blank speech bubbles can be used to promote thinking from someone else's point of view and even verbalize their thoughts. Comics with complete dialogues can be used for adding descriptions about the characters or settings. The teacher can also ask children to change the form of a comic strip to that of a short story.

Skills in focus: Seeing connections between pictures in terms of ideas/storyline; creating a sequence in a picture story; imagining the thoughts of characters in the picture.

Process: The teacher pastes the following comic strip on a chart paper and displays it in the class. She invites children to keenly look at the sequence of pictures and talk about it among themselves. The teacher participates in the conversation and points out cues from the pictures, if and when required. After some time, she divides the children into small groups and asks them to fill the 'thought bubbles' she has added to each panel of the comic. Children have to write what the character (Calvin) is thinking. The teacher moves around and helps children write in English. Later, she helps each group paste their thought bubbles around the respective panels of the comic and discusses what everyone has written.



Questions for the reader

1. Do you think we are able to cover all the language skills while designing demonstration sessions for teachers in workshops, camps, etc.?
2. In your opinion, what are the specific things a teacher should do to prepare her learners for such activities? And how will she know that her learners are ready?

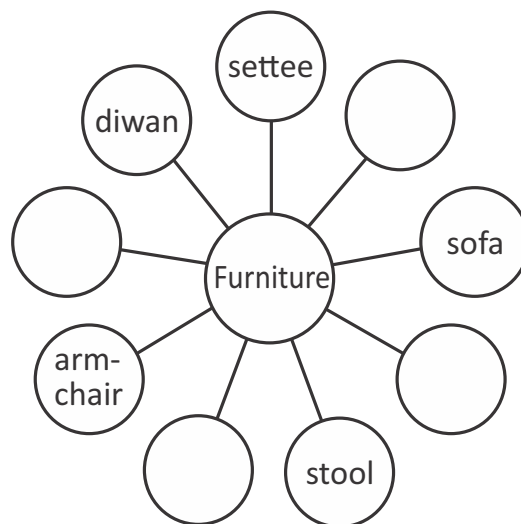
2.4.2 Vocabulary-based exercises

Vocabulary-based exercises on certain themes/topics/contexts provide learners with the opportunity to carefully look at words and observe patterns in spellings and their corresponding sounds (or vice-versa). Such abilities help children discover rules of spellings, pluralization, gender, etc. and learn how new words can be formed. Playing with words also develops insight into how English words are made and used in different contexts.

1 Illustrative activity 1: Pick the odd one out from the given word lists.

- a. leaves, table, branches, roots
- b. cake, chapati, rice, river
- c. ludo, carrom, cricket, chess
- d. sofa, boat, bench, chair
- e. happy, hungry, thirsty, sleepy

2 Illustrative activity 2: Put suitable words in the blank bubbles.



3 Illustrative activity 3: Add three more words to each list.

- a. plough, weed, sow
- b. paper, magazine, pamphlet
- c. chitter, roar, bleat, grunt
- d. canal, pond, ocean
- e. rock, plateau, ridge

4 Illustrative activity 4: Make more words for each category.

- a. more, sore, core, pore
- b. kind, mind, find, grind
- c. make, take, cake, bake
- d. round, mound, found, bound

5 Illustrative activity 5: Make ten words using these letters.

t p l e i o n c
y r g m a s b k

2.4.3 Language across curriculum

Unlike subjects like Mathematics and EVS, language has the benefit of having no specific content. Therefore, a language teacher should make the best possible use of content from subjects. In primary grades, language and EVS share a lot of their content while their teaching objectives differ. The advantage of using content from subjects is that it exposes the learners to a variety of texts, for example, narrative texts like a fable or diary entry, expository texts like an essay on a historical place or a description of different local dances, and argumentative texts like a movie review or written debate, etc. Besides, it also makes learners develop higher-order skills by doing a variety of language tasks, like surveys and interviews generally conducted in Mathematics and EVS, respectively, can also be used in the language classroom. A description of different food items and their sources (expository text) can be used for children to extract the main idea, analyse, compare, summarize, etc.



Figure 78 Language is learnt across all the curricular areas - all teachers can be language teachers.

1 Illustrative activity 1: Conducting interviews

Children are generally curious and ask a lot of questions about their surroundings. They also use a lot of questions when talking to their friends or elders. This seemingly ceaseless nature of their questioning is often sidelined in the classroom where most of the questioning is done by the teacher and the children are generally the ones to respond. Interviews are valuable tools in this regard – they develop questioning skills in children and give them opportunities to organize and articulate their thoughts and views in order to gain some information or understanding from another person. This leads to the development of language skills too. However, interviews are not to be conducted only after a particular age or maturity. Short interviews can

be practised right from primary grades where children can interview their favourite teacher, best friend, parents, siblings, or even their helpers like midday-meal cook, school peon or sweeper. The element of playing the role of a reporter can also be added to let children experience the interview task with some authority and responsibility – something which children would enjoy any day!

Skills in focus: Seeking information; asking questions relevant to your objectives; organising information creatively/imaginatively.

Process 1: Interviewing the teacher and friends

The teacher begins the class with an informal conversation about her family. She informs children that they can ask her questions to know more about her and her family. The children ask several questions and are also curious about their teacher's hometown and age. She answers them patiently and directs the conversation



Figure 79 Let us create more opportunities for children to talk to each other and people around them!

towards family whenever it deviates too far. The teacher then draws her own family tree on the blackboard with labels for relations and their actual names. She then pairs the children and asks them to question each other in a similar way. In this way, everyone gets to be the interviewer and interviewee at least once. The teacher encourages children to add more questions to their interviews. After they make a list of their questions, the interviews are conducted. There is a lot of buzzing and talking in the air! Once it dies down, the teacher asks each pair to draw their family trees on blank sheets of paper and helps stick these on the classroom walls. She realizes that many children have asked other questions too, so she uses these for discussion as well, for example: What is your favourite colour? Which is your favourite game? She uses the family trees to talk about similarities and differences, for example; Who lives with their grandparents? Who has the largest family? Whose family has most female members?

Process 2: Interviewing an animal!

The teacher works on a story, 'The Fox and the Ox' (SCERT textbook of Uttarakhand) which is about one animal interviewing another. She talks to children about what happens in the story and discusses the kind of questions one can ask in an interview. After this initial preparation, the

children seem ready to conduct their first interviews! The teacher puts them in small groups and asks each group to choose any animal and write a list of questions they would like to ask it. She offers suggestions, such as: What is your name? What is your favourite food? Do you have hands? Why don't you talk?, etc. The children form many questions in their home language(s) and the teacher helps write these down in English. The teacher then takes the role of each animal chosen by the group and tries to answer their questions. She lets children role-play too, and they fall over each other with the type of questions and answers they come up with! Some questions are pretty hilarious! The teacher writes all the questions on the blackboard and draws everyone's attention to the patterns of the questions, for example, the use of 'who' and 'why'. She makes more questions for each selected pattern.

2 Illustrative activity 2: Using riddles

Riddles are fun! Tricky as they are, they are a source of deep thinking and enjoyment in children. There are riddles aplenty in local languages, and



Figure 80 Solving riddles means interpreting textual clues and deciphering the answers - a fun language task for all learners.

they mirror the cultural features of the speakers of a community. In the classroom, riddles asked orally, give children the opportunity to listen, think and respond. They help children experience the use of language in different forms. They have the immense power to generate curiosity and interest among listeners which can be tapped for developing vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Riddles are also a breather from the usual stories and poems. The length of a riddle depends on the vocabulary and comprehension abilities of children. Encouraging children to make their own riddles engages them in wordplay and further develops their thinking and writing abilities.

Skills in focus: Guessing, problem-solving, understanding the usage of language in different forms, creative expression in the form of writing.

Process: The class IV EVS textbook by NCERT has a chapter, 'Spicy Riddles'. The main objective of the chapter is to talk about spices commonly found in a kitchen. The same chapter can be used in the English classroom, as well. Some sample riddles from the chapter:

<p>I can be powdered fine To make food hot and spicy, If too much of me is added I make you gasp – shheee... shheee... Your eyes and nose begin to water And you cry! And you cry! Think and tell me who am I? Tell me quickly, who am I?</p>	<p>Grind me and powder me – To make your food look yellow, I am mixed in oil by granny And applied to wounds quickly, I heal all wounds – big and small, That is why I am loved by all! Think and tell me who am I? Tell me quickly, who am I?</p>
<p>Small and round like a pearl, I am black when I am whole. I can be powdered coarse or fine A sharp and spicy taste is mine, Whether it is salty or sweet I am added as a special treat Think and tell me who am I? Tell me quickly, who am I?</p>	<p>I look like Zeera though green am I To make your stomach Healthy I always try, Eat me always after your meal I refresh your mouth, you surely feel, Think and tell me who am I? Tell me quickly, who am I?</p>

The teacher asks children to make a list of spices commonly used in local dishes like *mirchi* (chillies), *zeera* (cumin), *haldi* (turmeric), *dhaniya* (coriander), *elaichi* (cardamom), *laung* (cloves), etc. Children write these names in their notebooks and share them with the teacher. Most of the responses are in the local language, so the teacher introduces their English names and writes both down on the blackboard. The blackboard soon fills up with the names of 10-12 familiar spices. The teacher talks about their various uses, their uses in cooking, their appearance and taste. During the conversation, the teacher uses new vocabulary like 'grind', 'roast', 'fry', etc. The children understand what she says because of the context of the discussion and the use of actions. The teacher then displays one riddle and asks the children to guess which spice it is. The teacher points to several clues, such as words like 'hot', 'spicy', and 'cry'. The children guess the answer correctly. Once all the riddles are solved, the teacher draws attention to their rhythmic structure. She asks children to think of one other spice or object and make a riddle of their own. The teacher takes these riddles from the children, refines them a bit, and writes them down on different cards to make the children's very own riddle game! Children play with the game in their free time too and add more riddles which slowly become harder to guess! The teacher gets an idea! She plans to create more such riddle games with the help of the children using different ingredients used in cooking, sweet and savoury dishes. One day, she plays a pretend-play game of making different dishes. She uses the newly introduced vocabulary, like 'grind', 'roast', 'fry', etc. She writes down one recipe of making kheer and asks children to write their own recipes for different dishes using a similar format.

Recipe to make kheer (time taken = 1 hour 30 minutes)**Ingredients required**

- ½ cup rice
- 1 big spoon ghee
- 3 crushed cardamom seeds (*elaichi*)
- 1 litre milk
- 6 big spoons sugar
- 1 cup crushed almonds (*badam*) - optional

Method

1. Rinse the rice with water and soak for 30 minutes. Drain and keep aside.
2. Heat a pan on medium. Add the ghee and fry the cardamom seeds for a few seconds.
3. Add the rice and toss it with the ghee and cardamom for 1-2 minutes. Stir constantly until you get a wonderful aroma!
4. Add the milk to the pan and stir well. Turn the heat down.
5. Let the milk come to a boil. Keep stirring so that the kheer does not stick to the bottom of the pan.
6. Lower the heat and let the kheer cook for 20- 25 minutes. Stir every 2 minutes. If you want a super-thick kheer, cook for 10-15 more minutes (remember, kheer becomes thicker as it cools). Stir continuously.
7. Mix in the sugar and the almonds. Cook for 5 more minutes till the sugar dissolves completely.
8. Remove the pan from heat. Hot kheer is ready to be served! For chilled kheer, keep it in the fridge for some time.

**Questions for the reader**

1. How much time do each of these activities require? Do you think it is possible to do these activities in the regular school schedule with the given syllabus and textbooks?
2. What kind of preparation does the teacher require in order to design and execute such activities in her classroom?
3. What are some other possible activities which cut across the curriculum?

2.4.4 Storytelling

Children love listening to stories. Stories are the most commonly used tools in the English classroom and are a meaningful medium to introduce children to a new language and develop their language skills. Stories can be used to develop oral skills, build confidence, and enhance the skills of reading and writing. The foundational vocabulary developed through stories can be used in different contexts. Stories are also essential to boost imagination and thinking. Discussion around a story and its characters leads to critical thinking and encourages learners to share their own views and opinions. The pseudo-oral production of a story (told through memory, not in their own words) enables children to gain immense confidence in using English.

Skills in focus: Pseudo-production of a story and dialogues, build confidence, decoding and comprehension, analysis, organizing thoughts and write them down, questioning and answering.

Process: The teacher takes the following story-chart to the class and pastes it on the classroom wall. She uses a lot of actions and expression during the read-aloud.

“ *In a deep, dark jungle lived a HUGE elephant. He was a friendly elephant, but he had no friends! So sad, so very sad! One day, the elephant woke up and said, “Enough is enough! I want to make a friend today!” And off he went, deeper into the jungle.*

First, he met a monkey. The elephant asked, “Brother monkey, brother monkey, will you be my friend?” The monkey said, “No! No! No! You're so big and I'm so small! I'll not be your friend!” Poor elephant. So sad, so very sad!

Next, he met a frog. The elephant asked, “Sister frog, sister frog, will you be my friend?” The frog said, “No! No! No! You're so big and I'm so small! I'll not be your friend!” Poor elephant. So sad, so very sad!

Then, he met a sparrow. The elephant asked, “Sister sparrow, sister sparrow, will you be my friend?” The sparrow said, “No! No! No! You're so big and I'm so small! I'll not be your friend!” Poor elephant. So sad, so very sad!

Finally, he met a spider. The elephant asked, “Brother spider, brother spider, will you be my friend?” The spider said, “No! No! No! You're so big and I'm so small! I'll not be your friend!” Poor elephant. So sad, so very sad!

The elephant went back home.

Next day, the elephant saw many animals making noise and running here and there. He scratched his head and asked the rabbit, “Why are you all running?” The rabbit said, “The big fig tree near the river is on fire! Sister owl is trapped with her baby owlets!” The elephant ran swiftly to the tree and trumpeted loudly – Peeerrrrp! Paaaarrrrp! He ran to the river and filled his trunk with water. Can you guess what he did next? ”

The teacher talks about the ending of the story and asks children to guess what the elephant did with the trunkful of water. One child wants to know if the elephant is a girl or a boy. The teacher thinks this is a wonderful question and appreciates the child, inviting a spirited discussion. She then asks children questions for critical thinking that lead to a lot of debate, for example: Were the animals right in turning down the elephant's request for friendship? Would they be friends with the elephant? Why did the elephant help even though the animals didn't want to be his friend? She also writes a mix of factual and inferential questions on strips of paper and asks children to pick one question and answer it orally. She helps them read and answer in English.

The teacher uses the story chart for two trials of shared reading, then asks a few children to come forward and read one paragraph each. She helps children whenever they get stuck. She asks children to tell the story from memory or re-tell it in their own words if they can. The teacher then asks children to arrange sentence strips of the story in the correct sequence. The teacher goes back to the story chart and draws attention to the different punctuation marks used in the story. She calls children forward and asks them to circle as many punctuation marks as they can. She does this by selecting a paragraph and calling a few children at a time so that everyone gets a chance. The teacher then asks the children to read out all the dialogues – loudly, softly, slowly, quickly! She tries to develop the sense of punctuation marks based on how they impact the way we read and make meaning of the written text.

The teacher uses the first sentence of the story and asks children to write similar sentences in their notebooks. She asks: What if the story was about another animal? She also asks children other possible ways to start a story and writes the sentences on the blackboard, such as: 'Once upon a time'. She prompts children to make more sentences from these examples, with the support of their home language(s).

The teacher asks children to write a story on a different situation where all the animals want to be friends with the elephant, but the elephant is not ready. She allows children to write the story using mixed languages. The children work on their stories and read them aloud when done. The teacher chooses one story to make a skit. Some changes are made like adding interesting dialogues from other stories. The groups are shuffled so that children get the opportunity to play different characters.

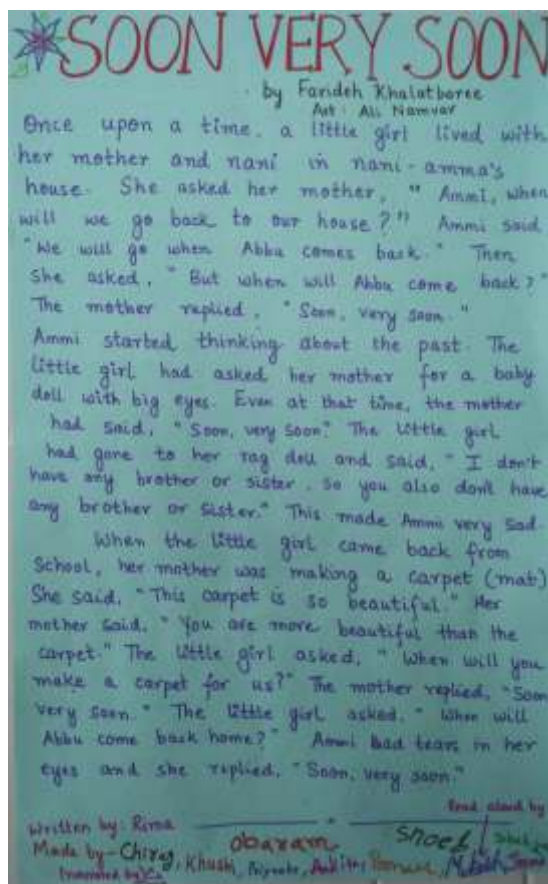


Figure 81 A story chart prepared after a thorough reading and discussion of a story. Notice how the story chart at this stage is significantly different from the print material prepared in the early language stage. In the early language stage, children are starting on their journey of reading and writing. Here, the theme of the story and use of language have both become more complex in nature.



Questions for the reader

1. How does storytelling done here differ from the storytelling done earlier?
2. Can you suggest some samples of good stories which can be easily used in our field contexts?

2.5 Illustrative Lesson Plans

The language-teaching potential of a text can be analysed only after a thorough reading of the text. Any text, like a story or a poem, has immense language-teaching potential. For example, a primary class text can be used to introduce the different parts of speech. The topics introduced to the students depend on the broad objectives and specific learning outcomes that have been selected for the class. The nature of the text also impacts the decision of *what* to teach the class through the text.

For example, it is easier to work on direct speech through a story given in the form of a dialogue or a comic strip. A teacher must perform an initial analysis of the chosen text before she takes it into the classroom.

The initial analysis of a text helps prepare for questions like –


- What are the key words and expressions that can be introduced in English while working on the text?
- What are some topics for talk or conversations (related to the theme) in the text?
- What is the scope of introducing new words (vocabulary) through this text?
- Which actions or expressions should be used to make their meaning clearer?
- What is the scope of working on sounds through the text?
- (If it is a story) At what points can the teacher pause to ask questions for prediction or analysis?
- How and when should pictures in the text be used?
- Are any additional pictures needed to help students understand the content introduced?
- What additional resources, like a short rhyme or an audio clip, are needed to make the lesson more effective?

Let us get a glimpse of the language-teaching potential of a few texts.

Initial Analysis 1: Initial analysis of text from the Rajasthan State Board textbook (class II)

The two lessons mapped below both talk about animals. In 'My Friends,' the students learn about the concept of befriending animals and books. The poem is rich with adjectives, and there is a lot of scope to teach the basic elements of language here. 'Picnic' talks about a picnic five animal friends go on and has a lot of potential to introduce and strengthen vocabulary.

Class and board: Class II RSTB textbook (Rajasthan)	Chapters: 8 and 9
Title of the poem: My Friends Title of the story: Picnic	
Picnic	
Activity	Content/ Process
1. Keywords from the story <i>(which the teacher will use during the class)</i>	friends, monkey, mouse, rabbit, squirrel, bear, picnic, games, vegetables, salad
2. Keywords from outside the story <i>(English words familiar to children which the teacher will use while teaching, like some action words, yes/no)</i>	Friends of the students: Rita, Satish, Kanha, Radhika Names of vegetables: cucumber, onion, cauliflower Places to go for picnic: garden, riverbank
3. Possible new vocabulary for children <i>(which the teacher will choose for children to learn; may overlap with 1 and 2)</i>	picnic, hide-and-see, noon, brought, pieces, mixed, delicious
4. Suggested vocabulary tasks <i>(1-2 tasks which relate to the story, like Dumb Charades and singular-plural)</i>	Action verbs: eat, wash, mix, bring, sit, go, play Nouns: names of vegetables and fruits
5. Sounds for oral practice <i>(1-2 sounds which the teacher can use for building awareness of sounds)</i>	/m/: mouse, something, monkey, name, some Difference between /ch/ and /k/ sounds: <i>chaat, chor-sipahi</i> , picnic, carrots, cabbage, cut
6. Key phrases/ expressions from the story <i>(which the teacher will choose for building familiarity with English structures and further practice, like Who questions, use of 'I like...')</i>	Use of 'it is...' and 'brought'
7. Topics related to the story for talk/ conversations with children <i>(e.g. Talking about different games children play, how they feel when no one plays with them, etc.)</i>	Places children want to go for a picnic, different games they play, and benefits of eating vegetables

Picnic	
Activity	Content/ Process
8. Possible picture-reading/ sequencing tasks for children (e.g. <i>Talking about the picture, labelling it, printing the pictures, and asking children to sequence the cards</i>)	Pre-reading: Talking about the first picture before beginning the story; Taking children's opinions about the first picture; Predicting the story looking at the pictures. Post-reading: Sequencing the picture cards of the story
9. Additional content related to the story (e.g. <i>a comic strip</i>)	Filling dialogue bubbles 

My Friends	
1. Keywords from the poem (which the teacher will use during the class)	Friends, big, small, land, sky, water, wriggles, grass, books, best friend
2. Keywords from outside the poem (English words familiar to children which the teacher will use while teaching. For example, some action words, yes/no)	Friends of the students, pet animals, mother, sister, brother, father, family
3. Possible new vocabulary for children, like rhyming words (which the teacher will choose for children to learn; may overlap with 1 and 2)	wriggles, land, sky
4. Suggested vocabulary tasks (1-2 tasks which relate to the poem, e.g. rhyming words, and homonyms/ homophones)	Rhyming words: fly, sky, my
5. Sounds for oral practice (1-2 sounds which the teacher can use for building awareness of sounds)	Sounds of 'y': fly, sky, my and many, very Sounds of 's': some, friends, sky, small, grass, vegetables, animals, books

My Friends							
<p>6. Key phrases/ expressions from the poem <i>(which the teacher will choose for building familiarity with English structures and further practice. E.g. Who questions, use of 'I wish...')</i></p>	<p>Use of 'some' and 'I have...' Interrogative sentences starting with 'who'</p>						
<p>7. Topics related to the poem for talk/ conversation with children <i>(e.g. Talking about different games children play, how they feel when no one plays with them...)</i></p>	<p>Children's friends, how they look, memories with them, best friends</p>						
<p>8. Possible picture-reading tasks for children <i>(e.g. Talking about the picture, labelling it, printing the pictures, and asking children to sequence the cards.)</i></p>	<p>Name the animals whose pictures are given (flash cards can be used here).</p>						
<p>9. Additional content related to the poem <i>(e.g. another rhyme or song – it will help if you can specify the content and paste it here)</i></p>	<p>Story link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QK6hmWBvSGo Design a similar activity with familiar animals and their actions:</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Move Like an Animal</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> <p>Chomp like  an alligator</p> </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> <p>Walk like  a bear</p> </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> <p>Hop like  a bunny</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> <p>Prance like  a chicken</p> </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> <p>Chew like  a cow</p> </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> <p>Roar like  a dinosaur</p> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;"> Illustration by Lucy Reed Illustration by mycupoftea.com </p> </div>	<p>Chomp like  an alligator</p>	<p>Walk like  a bear</p>	<p>Hop like  a bunny</p>	<p>Prance like  a chicken</p>	<p>Chew like  a cow</p>	<p>Roar like  a dinosaur</p>
<p>Chomp like  an alligator</p>	<p>Walk like  a bear</p>	<p>Hop like  a bunny</p>					
<p>Prance like  a chicken</p>	<p>Chew like  a cow</p>	<p>Roar like  a dinosaur</p>					

Initial Analysis 2: Initial analysis of text from an NCERT textbook (Class III)

In 'Nina and the Baby Sparrows' and 'Bird Talk', students are introduced to different types of birds, and the idea that birds can be pets too, 'Bird Talk' offers many chances to introduce vocabulary related to bird species, while 'Nina and the Baby Sparrows' can be used to talk to students about the caring for birds and build empathic awareness in students.

Unit: Unit 2 Title of the poem: Bird Talk Title of the story: Nina and the Baby Sparrows	
Nina and the Baby Sparrows	
1. Keywords from the story (which the teacher will use while teaching)	Nina, wedding, market, sparrows
2. Keywords from outside the story (English words familiar to children which the teacher will use while teaching, like some action words, yes/ no)	Nouns: girl, marriage, shop, bird, friends Emotions: sad, angry Transportation: train, bus Adjectives: beautiful, good, bad
3. Possible new vocabulary for children (which the teacher will choose for children to learn; may overlap with 1 and 2)	wedding, shook, lovely, plump, thrill
4. Suggested vocabulary tasks (1-2 tasks which relate to the story e.g. opposites and singular-plural)	Opposites: shook-nod, plump-skinny, lovely-ugly Adjectives: plump, lovely, little
5. Sounds for oral practice (1-2 sounds which the teacher can use for building awareness of sounds)	Double letters and their sounds: getting, married, wedding, little, happy, will, thrill 'th' sounds: thank you, thrill, everything, think
6. Key phrases/ expressions from the story (which the teacher will choose for building familiarity with English structures and further practice, like What...? and Why...? questions, use of 'I wish...')	What questions, why questions, tag questions (You went to the market, didn't you? We are going to eat, aren't we?) Use of 'either' and 'except'
7. Topics related to the story for talk/ conversation with children (e.g. Talking about pets children have at home/ have seen, how other animals they see around them.)	Talking about pet animals and how to care for them, preparations for a wedding

Unit: Unit 2	
Title of the poem: Bird Talk	
Title of the story: Nina and the Baby Sparrows	
Nina and the Baby Sparrows	
8. Possible picture-reading/ labelling tasks for children (e.g. <i>Talking about a picture, labelling it, sequencing picture cards</i>)	Talking about the first picture given in the chapter and labelling the second
9. Additional content related to the story (e.g. <i>a comic strip/ picture</i>)	A few lines on 'My Pet'. Link: https://byjus.com/class-3-my-pet-essay/
Bird Talk	
1. Keywords from the poem (<i>which the teacher will use during class</i>)	think, Robin, Jay, people, feather, beetles, wings, sitting, wires, funny
2. Keywords from outside the poem (<i>English words familiar to children which the teacher will use while teaching, like action words, yes/no</i>)	Names of birds Action words: say, sing, sit, fly, walk
3. Possible new vocabulary for children (including rhyming words) (<i>which the teacher will choose for children to learn; may overlap with 1 and 2</i>)	Robin, Jay, beetles, wires, funny
4. Suggested vocabulary tasks (<i>1-2 tasks which relate to the poem, like. rhyming words and homonyms/homophones</i>)	Ask the children give rhyming words for 'jay' and 'grow' (they can also give nonsense words)
5. Sounds for oral practice (<i>1-2 sounds which the teacher can use for building awareness of sounds</i>)	'th' sounds: feather, the, they, that
6. Key phrases/expressions from the poem (<i>which the teacher will choose for building familiarity with English structures and further practice e.g. Who questions, use of 'I like...'</i>)	Use of 'don't', like in 'they don't...', 'I don't...' Use of 'said', like in 'she said... think/ go/ sit'

Unit: Unit 2 Title of the poem: Bird Talk Title of the story: Nina and the Baby Sparrows	
Nina and the Baby Sparrows	
7. Topics related to the poem for talk/ conversation with children (e.g. <i>Talking about different games children play, how they feel when no one plays with them...</i>)	The difference between humans and birds, what if we had wings?
8. Possible picture-reading tasks for children (e.g. <i>Talking about the picture, labelling it, printing the pictures, and asking children to sequence the cards</i>)	Building a story on a picture of birds engaging in some activity.
9. Additional content related to the poem (e.g. <i>another rhyme or song</i>)	Videos of robins and jays – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGz-p00QTN4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_Xmhm2AU1E Sounds of different birds are played in the class and students try to name the bird that makes that sound, like crow, pigeon, cuckoo, cock, and hen.

The pointers for textual analysis become more advanced at each level of schooling, corresponding to the complexity and difficulty of learning outcomes. For example, the analysis of a poem for upper-primary and secondary classes will focus more on poetic devices, spatio-temporal references, literal vs. implied meaning, etc. However, these discussions are more relevant for higher level texts, and not primary class texts.

The initial analysis of the text helps prepare a more detailed lesson plan. Details of lesson plans include the duration of the plan; specific learning outcomes; pre-, while-, and post-reading activities; TLM/resources required; specific learning outcomes and plan for different groups of learners; plan for continuous assessment; additional content required, etc. The lesson plan must also be flexible so that it can be modified while teaching and/or while planning for the next English period. The learning outcomes should also be chosen in a way that they incorporate all the language skills and critical thinking skills. There are different lesson plan templates available online or in teacher education books. Any template can be used, as long as the above-mentioned points are considered.

1 Illustrative lesson plan 1: From the Chhattisgarh State Board textbook (Class I)

The lesson on 'Playthings' introduces students to English vocabulary of objects they are already familiar with. The lesson has boundless scope for introducing language elements such as simple verbs, and building word-picture association.

Chapter 1: Playthings Around Us

Time: 1 week

Concept/Theme: Building English vocabulary related to playthings familiar to students and using newly learnt words in conversations.

Pre-requisites for the concept:

Students can:

- respond to spoken instructions and questions;
- speak and repeat after hearing a word;
- identify objects and read them as picture;
- represent the text in the image form.



Chapter 1 of Chhattisgarh English Textbook

Content: Names of objects used as playthings by children.

Types of Images to be Used: The pictures selected by the teacher must be colourful and prominent, taken from the context of the child like top, bat, ball, skipping rope, etc. Indigenous games are not mentioned, so the teacher can make use of photographs or pictures of playthings familiar to the learners as well.

'Note for the Teacher', given in the textbook (in Hindi):

- Given in the textbook (in Hindi): Focus on appropriate pronunciation of words and practice them.
- Not given in the textbook: Talk about the given pictures and introduce their names in English. Discuss other playthings, using pictures to help students visualise them.

Associated Learning Outcomes

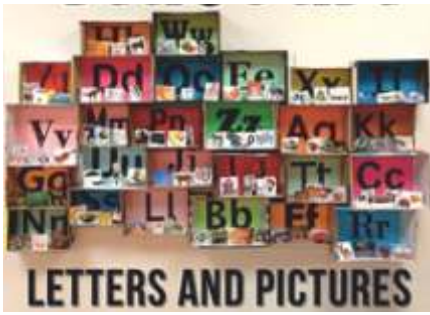
- Associates words with pictures.
- Names familiar objects seen in pictures
- Recognizes letters and their sounds (a-z)
- Differentiates between small (a-z) and capital letters (A-Z) in print.
- Carries out simple instructions such as 'Shut the door', 'Bring me the book', etc.

Project: Ask children to collect or draw pictures of toys and paste them in their portfolios/books.

Specific Objectives:

1. To make students aware of the English words they already know and use in their daily lives.
2. To provide students multiple opportunities to listen to the target language and respond using the home language.

Learning Activities	Process	TLMs/Resources	Assessment/Evaluation
Determining pre-knowledge	Step 1: The teacher plays a game of 'Identify the object' as a warm-up activity. She points at different objects in the classroom and asks children to respond to the question, "What is this?", "What is that?" in the students' home language. Students' responses are listed on the blackboard in English.	Objects in the class, i.e. blackboard, chalk, table, pen, pencil, book, uniform, shirt, pant, skirt, bag, gate, fan, light, etc.	The teacher divides the students into four groups and conducts a mini quiz. She asks questions such as "What do you use to write on the board?" and "What are you wearing?" Students' responses will be in English. (Single-word answers are accepted by the teacher.)
Introducing new vocabulary (Verbs)	Step 2: Children are provided with materials to make a plaything/ toy in the classroom. The teacher gives instructions in English, introduces some words like take, put, cut, fold, tear, stick, etc. Once they toy is made, she takes everyone outside to play. The teacher asks children about the toys they have made, like "Do you like it?" If they do, they give a thumbs up and shout "Yes!" or "I like it!"	Locally available material (like cloths, string, etc. colour papers, etc.) Stationery	The teacher invites another teacher/ head teacher/ principal to class after a short briefing about the conversation they need to have with the students. Children share their experience of making the toy. The other teacher engages the students in a short conversation about <i>how</i> they will play with the toy or if they would give to toy to their siblings, etc.

Learning Activities	Process	TLMs/ Resources	Assessment/ Evaluation
<p>Initiating multilingual conversations</p>	<p>Step 3: The teacher then initiates a conversation with students about the games they are interested in. She speaks in the home language of the learners interspersed with English words. She asks students questions, such as: “Which games do you like to play in your free time?” “Who do you play with?” “How do you play this game?” “Can you show me how to play [a commonly played/popular game]?” Students' responses will primarily be in the home language, mixed with one or two English words they know. The teacher can introduce new verbs here as well, like 'throw', 'catch' or 'hit' when repeating or appreciating their responses.</p>	<p>List of prepared questions</p>	<p>The responses of learners can be noted/ observed by the teachers for assessment.</p>
<p>Sound-Letter correspondence and phonological awareness</p>	<p>Step 4: Students can be asked to categorize the objects (toys and other game-related objects, such as dice) as per their starting sound and create an alphabet museum (i.e. square boxes arranged together, with the upper- and lower-case alphabets written at the back of the box. Pictures of objects that start with that letter is placed in the appropriate box.).</p> 	<p>Picture-word flash cards of familiar objects</p>	<p>Students can be asked to pick out one picture-word card from the alphabet museum and show it to the class after identifying/ naming the object.</p>

Learning Activities	Process	TLMs/ Resources	Assessment/ Evaluation
Captioning/ Labelling	<p>Step 5: The teacher asks students to draw pictures of different games they like to play with their friends. She engages students and gets them to talk about their pictures. The teacher then helps children label and caption their pictures, based on how they describe them. The labelled pictures are then put up on the wall/ class display.</p>	A4 sized sheets – white and coloured, colour pencils/ crayons, pencils and erasers, tape/ string	Assessment can happen during the teacher's conversation about the pictures they have drawn.
Use of Classroom English and TPR	<p>Step 6: The teacher initiates conversations with the students in the home language, mixed with English words familiar to students. Simple instructions, like “Open the window”, “Come in” or “Sit down” can be given in English, with the teacher using gestures to clarify the meaning.</p>		The teacher can assess the learners by their responses to the instructions in English.
Engaging with printed/ written material	<p>Step 7: Preparing or collecting flashcards with pictures of all the toys that have been introduced to them on one side and its name on the other. Children will be asked to play with the flashcards and name them without seeing the back. Students can speak in the home language and name the object in English.</p>	Picture-word flash cards of familiar toys	Teachers can assess the learners as they name the objects on the flash cards. Alternatively, a game using these cards may also be conducted, where students are divided into groups and asked to sort cards on some basis, like 'toys used outside' (ball, bat, skipping rope, etc.) and 'toys used inside' (doll, cars/ trucks, etc.)
Introducing song/ rhyme with actions	<p>Step 8: Introduce a poem parallel to the content, for example, a poem on playthings and practice it with actions. This is sung every day at the beginning/ end of the class.</p>	A poster with the words of the poem and a large colourful picture on it.	The students can be divided into groups and the teacher asks them to sing one verse/ stanza with

Learning Activities	Process	TLMs/Resources	Assessment/Evaluation
			actions. Each group can be given a chance with different verses/ stanzas.
Show and Tell	Step 9: The teacher asks students to bring one of their favourite toys to the school. A Show and Tell activity is organised, where students names the object (toy/ plaything) in English and talk about why they like it, or how they play with it in the home language.	Toys brought by children	The teacher can ask a few questions to every student after they have shown and talked about their favourite toy.

NOTE: All the work done during the exercises should be put up in the classroom, so the students can observe and engage with the material in their free time.

Additional Assessment Strategies:

1. A game of Pictionary can be held in the class, with the students divided into two to three groups.
2. A clap game can be conducted to identify a specific sound in a word, or a particular word in a sentence. For example, the teacher instructs "Listen to the sentence and clap when 'doll'" She then proceeds to say "*Mujhe fish bohot pasand hain, par meri doll ko nahi pasand*". The children are expected to clap when they hear the word 'doll'. Another exercise can be done here. The teacher asks "Can you hear /d/ sound in the following words? If you hear it, then clap to times. Like this." [Teacher demonstrates.] She then proceeds to say the words aloud slowly and clearly. (Bat, Dog, Fish, Ball, Egg, Doll). Children who identifies the sounds claps after 'dog' and 'doll'.
3. Guessing games – The teacher places a word strip (containing a familiar CVC or CCVC word) in an envelope. She slowly pulls out the word strip only showing the first letter and keeping the rest of the word covered. She asks, "What letter/ alphabet is this?" After students respond, she says, "Yes! This is c. What sound does c make? Does anyone know?" In the third step, she asks students "Do you know any words that start with the /k/ sound? Can you tell me?" Students are given chances to name familiar things that start with c. The teacher then uncovers the second letter of the word strip. "Can you guess this word now?" She continues this process till students correctly identify the word. This activity helps students learn to predict words and increase their reading speed.

2 Illustrative lesson plan 2: From Karnataka State Board English Nali Kali Cards (Class I)

The theme of 'My Body' is the first of the seven thematic units of the newly introduced English Nali Kali (ENK) cards. Each milestone (like a unit in a textbook) involves a range of pedagogies and practices that helps the teacher facilitate English learning in the MGML classroom. While the ENK cards outlines the processes and assessment strategies to be followed by the teacher, the plan below highlights additional activities that can be incorporated in the classroom to enrich the student-learning process.

Unit: Milestone 1, Listening and Speaking

Theme: My Body

Specific Objectives:

At the end of the unit, students will be able to:

- Follow commands and do the actions accordingly.
- Name the parts of the body in English.
- Describe parts of the body in simple sentences using “This is/ these are...”, along with singular and plural forms of the nouns.
- Recite the rhyme with correct pronunciation and actions.
- Pay attention and respond to verbal cues involving parts of the body.
- Use conventional greetings appropriately.
- Have a simple conversation in English and say their name and age.
- Answer simple questions.

Card Processes	Process	TLMs/ Resources	Assessment/ Evaluation
The teacher models, gestures and speaks simple instructions like “Stand up” and “Sit down” and students follow the instructions. (TPR)	The teacher narrates with actions a simple story using the home language of the learners which has simple instructions as dialogues (which are mentioned in English). She can use flash cards during the narration to emphasise the dialogues with instructions. After narrating the story, she engages the learners in a simple conversation, asking them questions, such as “What did the father tell Ravi?” and “Can you show me how Ravi reacted?”, to which the learners responds through actions/ gestures and words or show the appropriate flash card.	Flash cards with commands and pictures depicting the command	Students can be divided into groups, given sets of flash cards, and asked to follow the instructions/ commands they see in the cards.

Card Processes	Process	TLMs/ Resources	Assessment/ Evaluation
The teacher introduces the parts of the body in English and uses a poster/ chart to help practice the new vocabulary. (Presentation)	Students are made to sit on the floor, facing the front of the class. The teacher gives out flash cards with pictures of body parts on them. The teacher calls out a body part (e.g. "ears") with an action (e.g. "ears - hands up!"). All students with the ears flash cards must do that action. The process is continued with other words and different actions (for example, jump up and down, run on the spot, turn around, stand up / sit down, touch your toes, etc.).	Flash cards with pictures of body parts. (The kit comes with a set of these flash cards)	The teacher observes student learning during the activity itself.
The teacher introduces the concept of singular-plural and 'this is' and 'these are', i.e. demonstrative, using body parts as examples. (Grammar)	The teacher distributes flash cards with pictures of familiar objects on them – some have a single object; some have multiple objects printed on them. The teacher gives the class 10 minutes to go around and find the other student who has the card with the same object. Once the students are all paired up, the teacher asks the students to introduce themselves (some English can be used here as well) and then present their card in a full sentence using the correct demonstrative and verb forms.	Flash cards with pictures of familiar objects – some with pictures of a single object, some have pictures of multiple objects printed on them.	The teacher can observe the learners as they present their cards.
The teacher introduces a song/ rhyme about body parts with action. (Rhyme)	The teacher can introduce the <i>Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes</i> song to the class. She then divides the students into groups. She appoints one group to sing a verse, and they choose another group to do the actions. Once group 1 finishes singing the verse, the group that did the actions can choose another group to do the actions while they sing.	<i>Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes</i> , available here: https://planningplaytime.com/preschool-songs-body-parts	The teacher observes student learning during the activity itself.

Card Processes	Process	TLMs/Resources	Assessment/Evaluation
The teacher plays Simon Says with the students. (Language Game)	Children will prepare small dolls, helped by the teacher. The children then name their dolls, and the teacher engages them in conversations about the doll. Questions such as “Where is his/her house?” and “Does he/ she go to school?”, etc.	Cardboard cut-outs in required shapes Cloth, wool, glue, etc.	The teacher can observe a student during the conversation.
The teacher introduces basic English greetings and self-introductory sentences to learners. (Conversation)	The teacher works with the students to create a puppet show, where the characters greet one another in English. She works with the students to come up with simple dialogues for each character. If it is not feasible for all learners to participate in the show at once, this can be done at a group level.	Hand/ finger/ stick puppets Props, if required	The teacher observe student learning during the activity itself.
The story <i>Look at Me</i> is introduced to the learners. (Story)	The teacher reads from the book <i>Look at Me</i> and points out the various things that the boy and girl in the books use their body parts to do. She uses home language to talk about the pictures, and names only the body parts and the actions in English.	<i>‘Look at Me’</i> by Pankaj Chaturvedi, translated by Manisha Chaudhry	The teacher can ask students questions and collect oral responses, based on the book contents, like “Do you use your hands to write/ draw? What else do you use your hands for?” Students can respond in their home languages.
Evaluation	The teacher prepares paper/ cardboard parts of the body and the outline of a boy and girl. She divides the students into groups and gives a cardboard outline and a handful of paper body parts to each group. The students are then instructed to assemble/ paste the parts of the body on the cardboard outline. The students can be asked to colour the assembled figure.	Cardboard outline of boy and girl and body parts (which are now familiar to the child) – these can be drawn and white paper My Body Presentation Chart (part of the kit provided) Glue, Crayons/ colour pencils Pre-cut labels	The students in the group can then be helped to label the body parts.

3 Illustrative lesson plan 3: From the NCERT textbook (Class II)

The poem '*I am the Music Man*' introduces to learners musical instruments and their onomatopoeic sounds (the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named, like *bang!*). Other important language elements, like phonological awareness, also can be reinforced through the text of the poem.

Unit 8: I am the Music Man (poem)

Associated Learning Outcomes

Students:

- Enjoy listening to and singing English songs and rhymes with actions.
- Recite poems individually/in groups.
- Respond orally (in any language including sign language) to comprehension questions related to stories/poems.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Joyfully listen to and sing the poem with actions.
- Engage in conversations about musical instruments they are familiar with.
- Build English vocabulary related to musical instruments.
- Read words from the text.
- Form simple (SVO) sentences in English in oral and written form.

Materials Required: Class II NCERT Textbook (Marigold 2), a chart with the poem and an illustration on the music man or the musical instruments, large pictures of a piano and a set of drums, YouTube videos of pianos, drums and other musical instruments, flash cards of target vocabulary and another set of musical instruments.

Step 1:

Introduction: The teacher conducts a game in the classroom wherein students are instructed to listen carefully with their eyes closed. She instructs the learners to listen to the various sounds she makes and then guess what the sound was. She can also ask the learners to name the object she used to make the sound.

She asks the students to name other sounds they hear at home/ school.

Step 2:

The chapter can be started with a discussion on musical instruments. The teacher asks students questions in English, interspersed with words from

the learners' home language. Questions the teacher asks can include:

- Have you seen any musical instruments?
- Where have you seen them?
- Who plays them?
- When they are used?
- What kind of sounds these instruments do make?
- Which instrument do you like to play and why?

The teacher engages the students in a discussion, allowing children to speak and share their experiences with the class. She can write the words/ sounds of the instruments suggested by the students on the board, drawing their attention to the spellings as well. These words are later printed on a poster and put up on the wall. (The teacher can keep adding words to the poster in subsequent classes.)

Step 3:

The teacher sings the song '*I am the Music Man*' 1-2 times. She sticks a song chart on the wall and points to each word as she sings along. After some time, the students join the teacher in singing the song.

Step 4:

The teacher then initiates a discussion on the central theme/ concept of the poem. Here, she shows the large pictures she has prepared of a piano and a set of drums. She puts them up on the wall after the class. She can also make use of audio-visual aids, like YouTube videos to familiarise students with the look and sound of these instruments.

The teacher asks students a few questions about the poem in the home language of the learners to check how much learners have understood. Some of questions the teacher asks the students can be:

- Name the musical instruments the music man is playing in the poem.
- Which other instruments do you think he can play?
- From where is the music man coming?
- What song do you want the music man to play for you?
- How does piano sound?
- What is the sound of a big drum?

Students orally respond to questions. For those that the students have difficulty in answering, the teaching can give students prompts, like the sounds of the instruments for the first question.

Step 5:

Activity 1: The teacher plays a word-matching game using word cards and the song chart. Children have to pick a word card (of key words/ target vocabulary) and find the same word in the song chart. The teacher can try

other variations to this activity to work on letters and sounds, where students are asked to find, select and then match to the chart an appropriate word card. For example, the teacher asks the student “Pick a word that starts with letter 'f'”, or “Which word contains the /o/ sound?”, etc.

Activity 2: The teacher asks children to choose 1-2 flash cards of pictures of musical instruments they are familiar with and helps them talk about those instruments. She helps children write these sentences on a chart against their names, like 'Fathima – I can play the flute'. She further extends the activity, guiding students to use 'I can' in other sentences, such as 'I can sing a song/ dance/ jump/ clap my hands, etc.) Children write these down in their notebooks with the teacher's help (the teacher writes these on the board).

Step 6:

A 'class orchestra' is organised by the teacher at the end of the unit. The teacher identifies different sounds the students should make and assigns each student an 'instrument' – like the tapping of a spoon on a pencil box (for a xylophone), or the tapping of nails on a wooden surface (for a tabla). The teacher then asks the students to sing the song while pretending that the sounds they make are those of musical instruments.

The teacher records the performance for students to view at a later point of time/ share with parents.

Step 7:

The exercises are discussed by the teacher, and she reads out each question/ explains each task. She gives time for multiple students to answer/ respond and then helps them complete the tasks at the end of the unit.

4 Illustrative lesson plan 4: From the NCERT textbook (Class IV)

The primary aim of '*The Little Fir Tree*' is to sensitise students and make them feel happy with what they are or have. The short story can be used to introduce a variety of concepts to the students, like Parts of Speech and sentence structures. The universality of the theme increases the language-teaching potential of the text.

Unit 2: The Little Fir Tree (story)

Specific Objectives:

- To help students discuss and understand the concept of self-worth
- To help students learn new words from the text and use them in conversations
- Write short paragraphs in English
- To help students understand the pattern of “wh-” questions and how to answer them
- To familiarise students with the concepts of nouns, adjectives, and the relationship between the two

- To familiarise students with using the dictionary to understand new words

Associated Learning Outcomes

At the end of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- Take part in group activity, role-play, and dramatization
- Read aloud with intelligible pronunciation and adequate pauses the text appropriate to her age and context
- Uses the dictionary for reference

Day 1: Pre-Reading Activity/ Task

Materials Required: blackboard, chits of paper, plastic/ paper bag

The teacher talks to children about their wishes, using the stem, 'I wish...'. She writes each student's wish on the board and uses the sentences for shared reading. She asks children to come forward one by one and choose any one wish for independent reading. They also have to write the name of the child who made the wish. Children then write their wishes on paper chits and put them in a 'wish bag'. They are encouraged to add more wishes to the bag every day for one week, and the teacher tells them that she will open the bag at the end of the unit. She gives 5 minutes each day for this task and helps children write their wishes down. She explains that children can also write their wishes anonymously.

Day 2:

Materials Required: objects for magic show/ video to introduce the idea of magic

The teacher starts the class with a recap of the poem “*Noses*” by Aileen Fisher. After accepting student responses, the teacher asks the students questions in English, mixed with a few Hindi words., such as:

- Have you ever seen a magician? Do you know what he does?
- If you get a boon of four wishes, what will you demand?

The teacher can also offer a few suggestions of what students can demand as wishes, like 'I wish I can eat chocolates for breakfast', 'I wish I get a new ball' or 'I wish school closes early every day.'

If students are largely unaware of the idea of magic, the teacher can learn a few magic tricks by watching videos and conduct a Magic Show for her students.

Day 3: Introduction to the text

Materials Required: big book of the story

The teacher tells the story bilingually using a big book for emphasis. She introduces words from the story (some of the pictures in the big book can be labelled) and asks students questions, such as:

- “What did Shetty see when it started raining?”
- “What did Shetty offer the little fir tree?”
- “What did the fir tree ask for?”
- “Why was the fir tree sad?”
- “What happened when the fir tree's leaves turned to gold leaves?”

The teacher then engages the students in modelled and shared reading, using the big book. She can also attempt to ask questions of slightly higher level, like “What do you think would happen if the fir tree had paper/ plastic leaves?”

The big book is made available for the students to see/ read after the class.

Day 4: Reading the text and discussion

Materials Required: textbook

The teacher reads aloud the text clearly and slowly, and students follow the reading with a finger on the word being read. The teacher reads the text a second time, and this time asks the students to underline any words they do not understand.

After she completes the reading, she asks students to share parts of the story they understood/ liked, and builds a conversation around the students' responses, observations, and opinions.

Day 5: Dictionary skills

Materials Required: Dictionary, textbook, blackboard

The teacher lists out all the difficult words identified by the students during the previous class on the board. She pairs the students and asks them to look up one word. The first pair that finds the word stands up and reads it out to the class, and explains it, if necessary. The teacher adds more input/ gives more clarity to the meaning, if required. If there is insufficient time, the teacher gives each pair a different word to work with.

Once all the words have been identified and understood by all the students, the teacher can read the lesson once more as students follow in their textbooks.

The teacher gives 5 of the difficult words for students to make their own sentences as homework.

Day 6: Aspects of language: nouns and adjectives

Materials Required: Textbook, blackboard

The teacher asks students to keep their textbooks open in front of them. She then asks, “Can you tell me all the different things/ nouns you can see in the

story?" If students find it difficult to get started, the teacher can read out a sentence, and identify a noun and write it on the left side of the board. The students have the freedom to offer adjectives looking at the pictures as well. (For instance, the colour of the goat's fur is not mentioned in the text, but the picture shows it to be brown.) The teacher can also give prompts, if and when required.

The teacher then asks students to tell her more about one of the nouns on the board. She writes down student responses on the other side of the board, in line with the noun. She asks students if they know any more descriptions/ adjectives for the same noun, till students identify two to three different adjectives. She can ask students questions, such as "What is the size of the tree?" or "What colour were the leaves of the tree?" She guides them in using the nouns and adjectives in sentences orally.

She strengthens student understanding of nouns, adjectives, and the relationship between the two, while summarising the exercise. The teacher can prepare flash cards for keywords (nouns) with pictures and the associated adjective observable (needle-like, green leaves, or brown goat, etc.) and make them available to the students to play with.

Day 7: Story analysis

Materials Required: charts, markers, textbook

The teacher develops a story analysis chart and asks children to help her fill it. For this activity, the children have to revisit the written story and take help from it. The teacher prepares another chart listing the 4 wishes and their consequences. Sample charts can be seen below.

Story Analysis Chart:

	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4	Scene 5
Who are there in the scene?	Little fir tree Magician (Shetty)	Little fir tree Goat	Little fir tree Man/thief	Little fir tree Bright sun Wind	Little fir tree
Type of leaves	Leaves like needles	Green leaves	Gold leaves	Glass leaves	Needle-like leaves
How did the tree look? Draw and colour.					

Chart of the 4 wishes:

	Wish 1	Wish 2	Wish 3	Wish 4
What was the wish?	I wish I had green leaves like my other friends.	I wish I had gold leaves as goats do not eat gold leaves.	I wish I had glass leaves instead.	I like my old needle-like leaves best, for goats do not eat them. No man can steal them. The wind will do them no harm.
What happened to the tree after being granted the wish?	The goat ate the green leaves.	A man stole the gold leaves.	The wind broke the glass leaves.	The little fir tree was happy.

Day 8: Conversation

Materials required: Colourful cards/papers

The teacher put the students in pairs and asks them to think about one thing they admire in their partner. Each pair comes forward and shares. The teacher helps children express themselves in English.

The teacher extends the exercise to a guided writing task, where all the students write a message to their partner – “Dear friend, I admire you because...”. Children read their messages aloud and exchange them in front the class. Alternatively, the messages can be pasted on charts and put up on the wall.

The teacher writes down all the qualities on the board and later transfers them to a chart on the wall. She talks to children about admirable qualities found in all of us and how they make each of us special.

Day 9: Exercises

Material required: textbook

The teacher gets a student to read out an exercise question and asks the other students to give the answer. Once a few students have given the correct answer orally, she asks them to write it in the textbook. She writes the difficult words on the board to help students with spellings. Every student gets one or two chances to read out a question to the class.

Day 10: Summing Up

Material required: guided story writing worksheet

The teacher gives a guided story writing worksheet to the students to complete in class. After writing their stories, she asks students to draw a picture for their story. Worksheets are filed or pasted in students' notebooks once completed.

The teacher then opens the 'Bag of Wishes' and reads all wishes with the help of children. She also takes their help to stick all the wishes on a chart paper, write the title, decorate the chart and display it on the classroom wall.

**Further reading**

1. Children Talk Their Way Into Literacy by Gordon Wells (2003).
 2. ELI Handout 6 Learning the Script (2019).
 3. Extracts from National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) material prepared by Vidya Bhawan Society.
 4. Promoting Language and Literacy Through a Print-rich Environment PPT by Kathryn.
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Chapter 3 - Designing our Work with Teachers



Overview of Chapter 3

This chapter will help us build an understanding of the following:

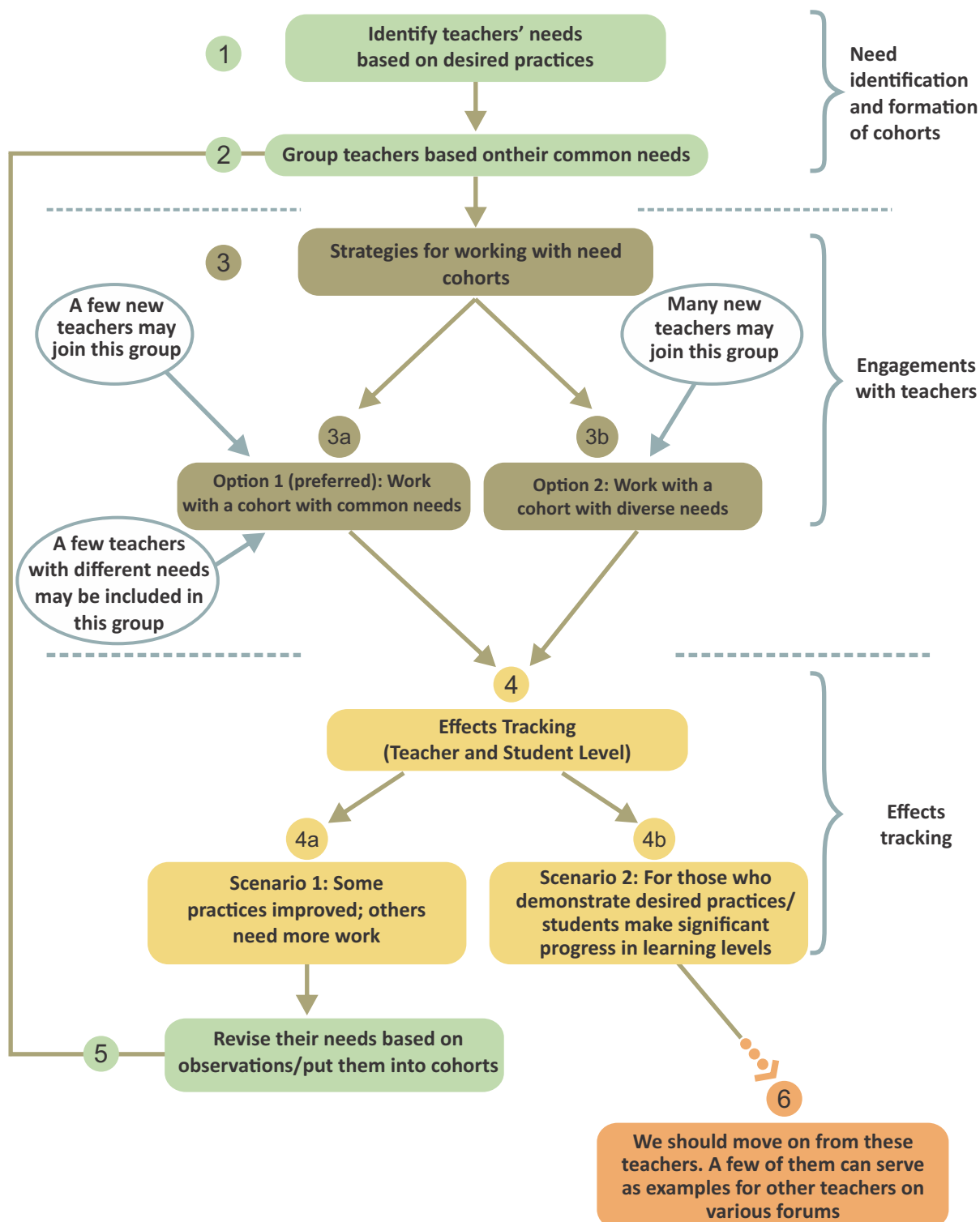
1. The flow of our work with teachers with the help of a diagram.
2. How to identify the needs of teachers and develop need cohorts.
3. How to develop a need-based engagement plan for teachers, with the help of a few illustrative examples.
4. How to track effects on teachers' practices and students' learning.
5. Our list of 6 desired practices and sub-practices for the Early Language Stage, including 5 essential, non-negotiable points on teachers' understanding of education perspective.

3.1 Revisiting the Guiding Principles of our Work with Teachers

1. When we support teachers in their work with children, one of the foremost principles that we follow in all our engagements is that of being respectful and sensitive to their challenges.
2. We believe it is important to work with teachers on their specific needs rather than following a 'one size fits all' method or an approach where we design engagements based on our interest and areas of expertise. We also realize that we will not be able to cater to every teacher individually if we want to have effects in a sufficient number of classrooms. Therefore, we try and group teachers with similar needs together and address them – such a group is called, a need cohort.
3. We believe that a one-off engagement with teachers is not sufficient to bring about a classroom-level change. We should have a teacher development plan for all our teachers (it could be for an individual or a group of teachers) containing the right mix of modes for continuous engagement. This could be a quarterly plan that clearly lays down the objectives we are trying to achieve, the themes that we will work on with them, and how we will scaffold those who need it.
4. It is also important to gauge the effectiveness of our work regularly so that we know what is working and where the gaps are, to feed back into our work.

3.2 Flow of our Work with Teachers

At the end of Chapter 1, we had briefly discussed the broad steps of working with teachers. The figure given below illustrates these steps.



3.3 Need Identification and Formation of Cohorts

Step 1: Identify teachers' needs based on desired practices

The 6 practices and sub-practices are simple, granular and observable. A member can either see these taking place in the classroom directly or infer from learners' learning and/or conversations with teachers. Based on these, the member will mark a 'Y' for yes/present or 'N' for no/not present, against the practice. The practices against which 'N' is marked become the needs of the teacher.

Note: There are some practices that are more crucial for learning than the others; these have been marked on the list and should be focused on first, before the rest.

Classroom Practice	Yes/No	Remarks
5.1. Plans specific opportunities for children to build awareness of print and practice reading in general using the written/printed forms of talk, conversations, rhymes, songs, poems, stories, etc. given in the textbooks, classroom print, board, etc.	Y	
5.2. Draws attention to the sounds and letters in the printed/written material through diverse tasks to practice the awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).	N	
5.3. Plans specific opportunities for children to journey from scribbling and drawing to independent writing (includes inventive spellings).	N	
5.4. Lets children make errors/mistakes in spellings/punctuation/grammar (the focus on accurate spellings/punctuation/grammar gradually increases in classes IV and V through diverse exposures, and even then, the teacher is gentle and encouraging while correcting).	N	

Methods of observing the desired practices

The list of desired practices is a nuanced one, and a classroom visit may be required to be certain of our conclusions about where the gaps in a teacher's practices are. However, many a time, even if we visit a teacher's classroom, she may not teach a regular class, or she may insist that we give a demo to her class or spend time talking with us to get some inputs on her classroom. While we may encourage teachers to teach, we have limited control over this aspect. In such cases, we must use other methods to infer whether teachers are actually carrying out these practices. The confidence that a teacher actually does something in the classroom is highest when she not only displays those practices, but also her children seem to have grasped the concepts.

- Classroom visits
 - Observing a teacher's practice
 - The teacher is taking a class and we observe the practices that she does or does not follow.
 - Inferring from the classroom environment
 - There are certain things a member may infer from the classroom itself; for example, is there a Reading Corner? Does it seem like it is used often or is it neatly displayed for adults to see?
 - Another inference can be drawn from the print-rich category of practices – Is the print material educationally relevant for children? How is it placed? Are a few items labelled in the classroom?
 - Infer from interaction with students.
 - Are the children open with the teacher? With us? Are they using a few words of English in their speech? Do they engage independently with the print-rich environment and the Reading Corner?
- Informal talk or sharing by the teachers also help us get some idea about their teaching practice. In this regard, our experience has been quite encouraging as teachers enjoy sharing what they do in the classroom through WhatsApp groups and other means. Making such interactions more structured/purposive goes a long way in developing a nuanced understanding of teacher practices.

Step 2: Group teachers based on common needs

Once the needs of the teachers, based on the list of desired practices, have been identified, an efficient way to address these is to group teachers who require inputs with a similar set of desired practices and address this through a session/a series of sessions. For example, if we feel that there are 15 teachers who require our input on 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, this can be called a cohort that needs inputs on developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).

Classroom Practice	Yes/No	Remarks
5.1. Plans specific opportunities for children to build awareness of print and practice reading in general using the written/printed forms of talk, conversations, rhymes, songs, poems, stories, etc. given in the textbooks, classroom print, board, etc.	Y	
5.2. Draws attention to the sounds and letters in the printed/written material through diverse tasks to practice the awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).	N	
5.3. Plans specific opportunities for children to journey from scribbling and drawing to independent writing (includes inventive spellings).	N	

Classroom Practice	Yes/No	Remarks
5.4. Lets children make errors/mistakes in spellings/ punctuation/grammar (the focus on accurate spellings/punctuation/grammar gradually increases in classes IV and V through diverse exposures, and even then, the teacher is gentle and encouraging while correcting).	N	

Please note that such need cohorts would be dynamic, which means we would group teachers into cohorts based on specific needs, address these needs, track effects and move them to other cohorts. One teacher may also be part of multiple need cohorts. We can plan to invite her to engagements relevant to all these need cohorts or decide to prioritise.

Step 3: Strategies for working with need cohorts

As discussed in figure 89, there are two options of working with teachers.

Option 1. Work with a cohort with common needs (described in detail below)

Option 2. Work with a cohort with diverse needs (details on Page 210)

Work with a cohort with common needs

This is the preferred way of working with teachers and should be adopted to the extent possible. For example, for working with the 15 teachers identified in Step 2 above, we can do a series of sessions that target the specific gap in their practices. A few illustrative examples of content mapping with need cohorts are given in the next section 3.4.

Please note that while we may call only 15 teachers for these sessions, there is a possibility that a few known teachers who are good at the practices in focus may also join. They can support us by talking about the effectiveness of these practices in their classrooms.



A note on English Proficiency Course

We discussed, in Chapter 1, the difficulty teachers face in teaching English given their own lack of proficiency, especially oral proficiency. We also know that a teacher of any language must have some level of comfort with the language in order to be effective, since she needs to provide oral and written exposure to her students. In the context that we work in, often, she is the only person around the children who can speak with them in English.

Therefore, we engage with teachers to bridge the gaps in their English language proficiency. This is usually done in the form of courses with multiple levels, series of VTFs, and in a few cases, we run the good old 'English Clubs'. These engagements are designed based on a guiding document (details below) and the content of these engagements follows from a few sample plans that were developed centrally. Facilitators contextualize this design to suit their needs. The response of teachers to this course has been very encouraging.

This course has proven useful to many English teachers across our locations and should form a part of our work with them. It is also a great way to mobilize teachers working in English, since learning English is an aspiration for all of us who live in a country where not only opportunity, but social status also gets influenced by how comfortable one is with this language. We must recognize this reality and help aspiring teachers become better at the language; this is bound to help them become better English teachers. However, please note that we should not limit this course to English teachers only. This should be open to all teachers, because (a) it helps mobilize teachers of all subjects, and more importantly; (b) we increase the chances of students learning English if, say, the Math teacher also gives language exposure to them. A guiding document for engagements on English Proficiency with teachers was prepared in 2017, with inputs from group of member with experience in the field. This document will continue to be revised from time to time.

3.4 Need-based Engagement Plans for Teachers

1 Illustrative example 1

Need cohort 1: Teachers who do not do an adequate amount of work with children on developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).

What do we expect from teachers while working with the script based on the list of desired teaching practices? The priority sub-practices are highlighted.

- 5.1. Plans specific opportunities for children to build awareness of print and to practice reading, in general, using the written/printed forms of talk, conversations, rhymes, songs, poems, and stories, etc. given in the textbooks, classroom print, etc. **N**
- 5.2. Draws attention to the sounds and letters in the printed/written material through diverse tasks to practice the awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics). **N**
- 5.3. Plans specific opportunities for children to journey from scribbling and drawing to independent writing (includes inventive spellings). **N**
- 5.4. Lets children make errors/mistakes in spellings/punctuation/grammar (the focus on accurate spellings/punctuation/grammar gradually increases in classes IV and V through diverse exposures, and even then, the teacher is gentle and encouraging while correcting). **N**
- 5.5. Creates multiple opportunities to assess children's awareness of print, awareness of sounds (phonological awareness), and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).
- 5.6. Uses feedback from assessment to develop further plans for working on the script.

We realize that there is a group of 15 teachers that do not adequately work on 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4. We group them into a need cohort.

From the remarks on the observation, we know what they do is the following:

1. They begin with the teaching of the letters of the English alphabet in the given order.
2. They make the children learn the names of letters with the name of a familiar object having the target letter in the beginning - a for arrow, b for baby....
3. They also make children practice writing these letters and to gradually master the script.
4. This is followed by making children learn the spellings of common three- to five-letter words and practice writing these correctly.

How do we decide what work needs to be done with these teachers?

Objective of working with need cohort 1: Help teachers meaningfully work on developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) in children.

Table: Content mapping for need cohort 1

Content for the cohort	Corresponding sections of the handbook
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Helping children develop – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Print awareness b. Awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) c. Sound-letter correspondence (phonics) 2. Content that cuts across – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Learning Outcomes b. Focus on comprehension c. Use of comprehensible input d. Oracy-literacy connect e. Print-rich environment f. Variety of inputs (spoken and written) g. Child's context, age, and interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5 Objectives of Teaching English and Learning Outcomes prescribed by NCERT • Development areas in Early Language Stage: 2.1.2 Development of reading abilities; 2.1.3 Development of writing abilities • 1.6 Aspects of Early Stage English Language Learning: Awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics). • The note in 2.2.5 on developing sound-letter correspondence (phonics) • 2.2.5 CP 5. Developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) • Additional resources: ELI Handout 5: Supporting Phonological Awareness in Pre-Primary and Primary Classrooms (2019); ELI Handout 6: Learning the Script (2019); Sounds of English Language; Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read by National Institute of Literacy (NIA), USA (2006) <p><i>Please note: The above sections are indicative only. It is a good idea to refer to the other sections too.</i></p>

Illustrative flow of content (detailed)

Step 1: Understanding the problem of working on the script through an activity

The facilitator writes a sentence or two on the board using a familiar script but an unfamiliar language. She asks the participants to try and read what is written. This simple activity helps the participants understand the importance of knowing both the script and the language in order to meaningfully read and write. It also helps them empathize with the child's struggle to read and write when she only has a superficial understanding of the script and no real knowledge of the language. This activity can also be done in groups using different combinations of familiar/unfamiliar scripts and languages.

Step 2: Discussing the prevailing practices of working on the script

The facilitator asks the participants to share some of their current practices of teaching children how to read and write. It is possible that they share some standard practices which we have discussed in the associated sections of the handbook where there is an over-reliance on the home language(s) of the child using methods like translation and transliteration. The facilitator explains with the help of examples how there is no one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds in English and that the order of letters and letter names, letter symbols, and individual speech sounds are arbitrary and meaningless. The facilitator will also discuss the following –

1. Importance of beginning writing practices like drawing and scribbling; creating opportunities to draw and scribble in the classroom.
2. The futility of copy-writing.
3. How important is beautiful/cursive handwriting?

Step 3: Drawing the pre-requisites of reading and writing

The facilitator moves the discussion forward and draws out a list of pre-requisites for reading and writing meaningfully –

1. Knowing the language.
2. Knowing that there is an association between speech and writing – what is spoken can be written, and what is written can be read.
3. Knowing the sounds and their corresponding letters and how to manipulate them.

Step 4: Watching a video: Child playing with a storybook

The facilitator shows a video of a child flipping through pages of a storybook, despite not knowing how to read or write. The child turns the book round and round, but has some awareness of how someone behaves while reading a book. The facilitator takes this opportunity to discuss –

1. Importance of developing the concept of print in children.
2. How it can be developed in the classroom given the challenges of our field contexts.

3. Role of print-rich environment, reading corners, etc.
4. Importance of providing opportunities for beginning writing in the classroom – drawing and scribbling.

Step 5: Demonstrating an activity for building awareness of words

Option 1: Talking, modelled writing, and shared reading

The facilitator talks to the participants about an interesting topic, such as their favourite pastime and notes down keywords and phrases on a chart paper. She calls this the 'word wall'. She reads what she has written by using 'finger-pointing' and encourages the participants to repeat after her. She then uses the wall to practice a few word-identification games with volunteer participants.

Option 2: Reading-aloud using a big book or story chart

The facilitator conducts a read-aloud session using a big book or story chart with a lot of actions and expression. She uses 'finger pointing' while reading and points to the pictures too. She reads the story first and talks about it by asking a number of questions. She later asks the participants to read along with her. She plays a few word-identification games with volunteer participants then asks the following questions for discussion –

1. How long does it take for children to develop an awareness of words?
2. What will help children identify words in the beginning? What will you do if they make a mistake?
3. Why is it important to use familiar words for word identification?
4. Can you write down words from the child's local language to build the child's awareness of words?
5. What is a good way for the teacher to identify keywords and phrases for use in English?

Step 6: Designing more activities for building awareness of words

The facilitator asks the participants to work in pairs and formulate one activity using the content of their choice (the content can be from the I-V English textbooks or text given by the facilitator). The facilitator also asks the participants to identify keywords and phrases from the content which they would like to use in English while teaching. The pairs complete their work and share it with the others and the facilitator for feedback. The facilitator shares a handout of more sample activities for practising awareness of words.

Step 7: Building awareness of sounds (phonological awareness): Working on rhyming words

The facilitator selects words from the demonstration done in Step 5 (or from activities suggested by the participants in Step 6) and plays some games on rhyming words. She discusses the importance of using rhymes for working on rhyming words and may introduce a short rhyme relating to the content of the

discussion as a sample. She discusses more activities for practising rhyming words.

Step 8: Designing more activities for developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics)

The facilitator divides the participants into 4 groups and asks them to design 3 activities, where each activity is divided into two parts – part 1 in which the activity is entirely oral, and part 2 in which letter names and symbols are also used.

Group 1: Awareness of syllables

Group 2: Identifying and isolating sounds

Group 3: Segmenting and blending sounds

Group 4: Manipulating sounds

The groups complete their work and share it with the others and the facilitator for feedback. The facilitator asks the following questions for discussion –

1. Can you design and implement such activities in your classroom?
2. How much time will you devote to practice each day? What will you do in the remaining time?
3. When will you begin to introduce letters? In which order will you introduce them?
4. Is it good to wait for children to fully develop phonemic awareness before introducing letters?
5. Can letters be introduced even in earlier stages when children are developing awareness of words and rhyming words?
6. Do you think children's names are a good starting point for such activities?

Step 9: Working on letters names

Activity 1: Working on a few letter at a time

The facilitator asks the participants to flip through the class I-V textbooks and read out words which are familiar to them. She writes these words on the board and uses them for playing a few letter-identification games.

Activity 2: Arranging letters alphabetically

The facilitator asks the participants to go back into their 4 groups and gives them the following tasks –

Group 1: Create name cards of students in your class and arrange them alphabetically on a chart.

Group 2: Create a 'word wall' of familiar English words known to students and arrange them alphabetically on a chart.

Group 3: Extract sight words from the textbooks of classes I-V and write these alphabetically on a chart.

Group 4: Create at least 15 cards of 15 keywords from a story and arrange them alphabetically.

Step 10: Strengthening letter-sound correspondence (phonics) through inventive spellings

The facilitator reads a brief factual piece from Ruskin Bond's book, 'The Wonderful World of Insects, Trees and Wildflowers' and talks about it. She dictates a few not-so-familiar words and asks the participants to write the spellings in their notebooks. After dictation, she gives the participants 5 minutes to check their spellings. She then writes the correct spellings of the words on the blackboard and asks the participants to compare their spellings with the ones on the blackboard. She repeats this activity with a few more words. This leads to a discussion on the following questions –

1. Why is it important to let children develop their own spellings before looking at the conventional spellings? Is it a good sign or a bad one if children spell phonetically, for example, 'tebl' or 'tabl' for 'table'?
2. Is it enough for the teacher to simply show the correct spellings? What should she do to help children find patterns in spellings?
3. What kind of text will you select for conducting this activity in the classroom? Will you use only familiar words for this activity?
4. Can you think of some more activities which will help children attempt writing using inventive spellings?

Step 11: Designing a lesson plan for working on words, sounds, and letters

The facilitator asks the participants to go back to their 4 groups, choose any content from their textbooks, and design a plan for working on words, sounds, and letters. The groups have to design at least one TLM and one worksheet. The groups complete their work and share it with the others and the facilitator for feedback. The facilitator shares some sample worksheets and closes the discussion.

Note:

1. The content can be broken into chunks depending on the hours of engagement/mode and requirement of teachers. It is possible that teachers from other cohorts may also need some help in this content area.
2. It is important to design the sessions in a way that teachers reflect on their practices and what can be done to improve these.
3. All sessions should focus on classroom processes and practices

Scaffolding plan for the cohort (16 hours, spread over multiple modes)			
Modes	Frequency and hours of engagement	Content and key resources	Sample questions for assessment of the cohort
VTF	VTF 1 (2 hours)	1.a. ¹ Print awareness Key resources – storybooks, big books, story/name charts	Has the teacher increased the involvement of children with printed material?
	VTF 2 (2 hours)	1.b. Awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) 1.c. Letter-sound correspondence (phonics) Key resources – rhymes and rhyme charts	Has the teacher – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempted to use more rhymes and songs? • Introduced language games using printed words? • Used familiar words for working on sounds?
	VTF 3 (2 hours)	1.b. Awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) 1.c. Letter-sound correspondence (phonics) Key resources – letter cards	Has the teacher – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempted to talk about different words and their sounds? • Introduced a few sound-letter games? • Used familiar words for working on letters?
	TLM development 1 (3 hours)	Designing big books	Has the teacher – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used the big book in her classroom? • Tried to make more big books? • Tried to involve children in making more big books?
	TLM development (3 hours)	Member – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares material like articles and suggestions for classroom processes/practices corresponding to the content. • Asks teachers to share queries or progress in the form of short sharing, photos, and videos. 	Has the teacher attempted to use the prepared TLMs and activities in the classroom?

¹Refer to section 3.4, Table: Content mapping for Need Cohort-1

Scaffolding plan for the cohort (16 hours, spread over multiple modes)			
Modes	Frequency and hours of engagement	Content and key resources	Sample questions for assessment of the cohort
Online support	Continuous	Member – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shares relevant material with the teachers online and encourages them to share updates and questions online as well. (whatsapp, facebook closed groups, etc.) 	Has the teacher tried using the suggested material in the classroom?
School visits	Planned visits to schools of identified teachers in the cohort	Member – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talks to the teacher and discusses progress and challenges. Observes the teacher take a class, if possible. Demonstrates a few classroom processes/practices. Interacts with children for some time. Shares more storybooks, articles, worksheets, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has the teacher tried? What further help does she require? Will she benefit if the member demonstrates some activities?
3-day workshop	1 workshop (4 hours out of the total 18 hours)	Mixed content with a few sessions on working on the script.	Is the teacher able to implement learnings from the workshop in her classroom?

Note:

- This is a sample plan where the cohort is engaged for 16 hours across multiple modes.
- The plan includes visits to schools of identified teachers of the cohort and continuous online support to all teachers.
- The cohort is engaged with specific content, but other content areas are not completely ignored. The designed material and classroom processes/

practices serve multiple objectives and learning outcomes, so there are overlaps. The content is not watertight.

- Teachers are also part of other cohorts. The cohorts are dynamic.
- Sample questions for assessment of the cohort are given against each interaction/ engagement with the full awareness that change in classroom processes/practices takes place incrementally and over time. The questions point to the direction in which the cohort is expected to develop.

2 Illustrative example 2

Need cohort 2: Teachers who do not evolve a print-rich environment in their classrooms/school.

What do we expect from teachers in terms of evolving a print-rich environment, based on the list of desired teaching practices? The priority sub-practices are highlighted.

- 4.1. Evolves a print-rich environment in the classroom using relevant material which is either store-bought or self-made or made by children during the course of teaching. **N**
- 4.2. Creates the print material at low cost with locally available resources so that it can be easily replicated for other children/classrooms. **N**
- 4.3. Places the print material at the eye-level of children or at accessible spaces so that they can independently engage with it. **N**
- 4.4. Exposes children to books other than the prescribed English textbooks, such as storybooks, comics, and picture dictionaries. **N**
- 4.5. Plans activities for children to engage with the print material so that the material is not merely displayed for decoration. **N**
- 4.6. Encourages children to independently engage with the print material without being too worried about its wear and tear. **N**
- 4.7. Uses the print material to build awareness of print and practice reading in general. **N**
- 4.8. Uses the print material to practice awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) through diverse tasks. **N**
- 4.9. Uses the print material as the basis for writing - initially letting children respond through scribbling and drawing then, progressing to writing a few words or sentences through shared, guided, and independent writing tasks.
- 4.10. Takes the support of the print material to create multiple opportunities for assessing reading (from identifying words to independent reading).
- 4.11. Takes the support of the print material to create multiple opportunities for assessing writing (from drawing and scribbling to independent writing).
- 4.12. Assesses the children's interaction with the print material to develop further plans for making the classroom print-rich.

We realize that there is a group of 15 teachers that do not adequately work on 4.1 to 4.8. We group them into a need cohort.

From the remarks on the observation, we know what they do is the following -

1. They use the blackboard for writing the alphabet or words/ sentences which children copy/ write in their notebooks.
2. They involve children in printed material, like alphabet charts and letter cards which are store-bought.
3. They have a few storybooks which are given to children under strict supervision.
4. They stick a few drawings made by children on the classroom walls.
5. There are some quotations by great thinkers written on the school walls which are read in the morning assembly.

How do we decide what work needs to be done with these teachers?

Objective of working with need cohort 2: Help teachers evolve a print-rich environment in their classrooms.

Table: Content mapping for need cohort 2

Content for the cohort	Corresponding sections of the handbook
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evolving a print-rich environment in the classroom – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is a print-rich environment? Why is it important at the primary level? b. Common misconceptions about a print-rich environment; Is it created, or does it evolve during the course of teaching? c. Evolving a print-rich environment through some suggested activities d. Developing a rich and accessible Reading Corner 2. Content that cuts across – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Learning Outcomes b. Focus on comprehension c. Use of comprehensible input d. Oracy-literacy connect e. Variety of inputs (spoken and written) f. Child's context, age, and interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5 Objectives of Teaching English and Learning Outcomes prescribed by NCERT • The note in 2.1.3 on the connection between oral language (oracy) and reading and writing (literacy) • 2.2.4 CP 4. Creating and using a print-rich environment • Additional resources: Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game by KS Goodman in Reading for Meaning by NCERT (2008); ELI Handout 8: Creating a Print-rich Environment in Classroom (2019); Promoting Language and Literacy Through a Print-rich Environment – a PPT by a teacher, Kathryn; Classroom Labelling: A Staff Training Aid, a publication of the Environments Professional Group, (2005) <p><i>Please note: The above sections are indicative only. It is a good idea to refer to the other sections too.</i></p>

Illustrative flow of content (detailed)

Step 1: Experiencing the joy of writing 'The Story of My Life'

The facilitator distributes blank sheets of paper and asks everyone to write 'The Story of My Life' using only 5 sentences. Once complete, she pastes the stories in a designated corner which says 'The Stories of Our Lives' and asks everyone to write their names on their sheets. She then asks everyone to read as many stories as they can in 5 minutes, choose their favourite story, and share why they liked the story and were drawn to it. Once everyone has shared, the facilitator asks the following questions to take the discussion forward –

1. Can a simpler version of this activity be done in the English classroom?
2. Which language skills can be nurtured through such activities?
3. Does this activity require a lot of resources?
4. Why is it important to use printed material that is relevant to the context, age, and interests of children?

Step 2: Designing word- and letter-identification questions

The facilitator asks the participants to work in pairs and write 2 word-identification and 2 letter-identification questions which can be asked using the stories pasted on the walls. The participants share their work and the facilitator gives examples of more interesting questions which children will enjoy answering. She talks to the participants to find out which other supporting print material will help children complete the activity, for example, an alphabet chart.

Step 3: Using name charts

The facilitator gives 2 blank name cards to each participant and asks them to write, colour, and decorate their name as they please. The facilitator sticks one copy on the 'name chart' and collects the second copy to make a stack of name cards with everyone's help. She then plays a variety of word, sound, and letter games using the name chart with the help of name cards and letter cards. The facilitator has a discussion on the following questions –

1. If you conduct this activity in the classroom, will all the children be able to write their names? How will you help them?
2. Why is it important to have a 'name chart' in each primary classroom?
3. What are some other charts which can be derived from names? (like birthday calendar)
4. Does this activity require a lot of resources?

Step 4: Designing more print material

The facilitator divides the participants into 6 groups and gives them the following tasks. The facilitator also asks each group to think about specific steps to involve children with the material –

Group 1: Create a 'word wall' of familiar English words known to students.

Group 2: Extract sight words from the textbooks of classes I-V and write them on a chart.

Group 3: Make classroom label.

Group 4: Choose two stories from the textbook of any one class and make a picture dictionary of keywords. (*The facilitator explains how this picture dictionary should look like – it contains the word, a picture, and 1-2 sentences using the word; it is stapled together; it is neither too big nor too small; there can be more than one dictionaries, for example, separate ones for naming words, action words, describing words, and pronouns.*)

Group 5: Identify all the objects inside/outside the hall and label them.

Group 6: Make a midday meal chart in English which can be pasted near the menu painted on the wall in school.

Step 5: Sharing the print material and demonstrating its use

The facilitator asks all the groups to give a demo of their work. She offers suggestions and invites suggestions from the other group members too. She further asks the following questions for discussion –

1. Is the material we have made so far difficult to make or costly?
2. How can children be involved to collaboratively make the material with the teacher?
3. Can English be taught only *after* the material has been made or while it is being made too? What are some ways to involve children with this print material?
4. What are some important points to keep in mind while designing the material and placing it in the classroom? (For example: font size, height while pasting, and what happens if the material tears?)

Step 6: Evolving a print-rich environment while teaching

The facilitator asks the participants to go back to their 6 groups and design one activity each which can be conducted during the normal course of classroom teaching for evolving a print-rich environment in the classroom. Teachers can be asked to design an activity where children get to –

Group 1: Draw and scribble given an interesting topic.

Group 2: Make their own lists of words on topics that they find interesting.

Group 3: Colour and describe a picture using mixed languages.

Group 4: Write one-line riddles to make a riddle box.

Group 5: Make a bilingual storybook in groups (for developing the Reading Corner).

Group 6: Follow instructions given by the teacher to make a craft project using waste materials.

Step 7: Why we struggle to evolve a print-rich environment: Some common misconceptions

The facilitator asks everyone to quickly jot down the top reasons why we struggle to

create a print-rich environment in school. She gives 5 minutes then asks everyone to share. She discusses whether the activities done till now help ease their worries and if they would like to try them in the classroom. She also discusses–

1. Some common misconceptions about print-rich environment.
2. Importance of developing a rich and accessible Reading Corner.

Step 8: Designing a school plan for a print-rich environment

The facilitator divides the teachers into 4 groups and asks them to design a one-month plan for evolving a print-rich environment in their school (which includes a plan for developing a Reading Corner). She asks them to design a timeline with specific steps for ensuring that such an environment evolves. The groups complete their work and share it with the others and the facilitator for feedback. A suggested format could be (*it is filled for your reference, please give a blank format to teachers and encourage them to fill it after discussing with their group members and your support/feedback*)–

Month 1 Plan for evolving a print-rich environment in school				
Week	Activities	Time required	Resources required	How to involve children
Week 1	Creating a 'word wall'	Continuous	Charts papers, sketch pens, crayons, tape, scissors, etc.	The teacher will put up two chart papers side-by-side and ask children to write any English word they like or find interesting. The teacher will add words to the 'word wall' while teaching and talk about the words written by children. The teacher can use this chart for word, letter, and sound identification activities.
	Labelling the classroom	1-2 English periods for evolving the labels and 10-15 minutes each period for practice		The teacher will talk about the different objects in the classroom or the children's names, like "Who gave you your name?", "Do you like your name?" and "What is your friend's name?". Children will make the material with the help of the teacher.
	Developing a name chart	1-2 English periods for evolving the chart and 5-10 minutes each period for practice		After making the material, they will be involved with the print through multiple activities – Week 1: Word identification + working on beginning sounds; Making more labels for outside the school

Month 1 Plan for evolving a print-rich environment in school				
Week	Activities	Time required	Resources required	How to involve children
				Week 2: Word identification + letter identification + working on all sounds; Making a birthday chart.
Week 2	Developing the midday meal menu chart	2-3 English periods for evolving the chart and 5-10 minutes around the midday meal or after the morning assembly or before dispersal		<p>The teacher will talk about the midday meal; for example, on who makes the meal, what the students eat and drink during their mealtime, and how they wash their plates, etc. Children will make the material with the help of the teacher.</p> <p>After making the material, they will be involved with the print through multiple activities –</p> <p>Week 2: Word identification + working on beginning sounds</p> <p>Week 3: Word identification + letter identification + working on all sounds; Making an imaginary menu (for school event/birthday/wedding, etc.)</p>
	Making a personal set of letter cards	2-3 English periods for evolving the letter cards and 10-15 minutes each period for playing with the cards (children will be encouraged to play during their free time too)		<p>Week 2: The teacher will give each child a set of 26 cards for making letter cards. Children can write capital letters on one side and small letters on the other. They can take their time to decorate their cards. The teacher will play a variety of letter games (if required, she can pair the children).</p> <p>Week 3: The teacher will give each child a few more blank cards for making duplicate copies of letters, for example, of vowels, and play games like build-a-word, build your name, etc. She can ask the children to refer to the other charts pasted on the classroom walls to check the spellings.</p>
Week 3				
Week 4				

Month 1 Plan for evolving a print-rich environment in school

Developing a rich and accessible Reading Corner

<p>What steps will be taken by the teacher to develop the Reading Corner?</p>	<p>The teacher will –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add rich resources to the Reading Corner, like storybooks (<i>the facilitator will discuss how and where these resources can be procured</i>), and remove existing irrelevant material. 2. Designate special Reading Corner periods during which children can freely read storybooks and other available material of their choice and talk about/share these with the others in a planned manner, like during circle time or the morning assembly. 3. Involve children with print through planned activities, like storytelling and read-aloud sessions, after which children can share what they have read. 4. Incorporate resources from the Reading Corner while teaching English in the classroom to give print exposure beyond the English textbook. 5. Plan activities to collaboratively build more resources for the Reading Corners, for example, making big books, picture dictionaries, and word walls.
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Step 9: Evolving common processes for each English period

The facilitator will ask the participants to stay in the same groups and evolve a list of common processes which they would incorporate in all English periods. Suggested processes could be –

1. Responding to the content through drawings and scribblings.
2. Colouring a picture related to the content and labelling it.
3. Writing stories using mixed languages.
4. Making lists of words related to the content.
5. Participating in art and craft activities where the teacher gives instructions in English.
6. Reading storybooks kept in the Reading Corner (teacher will enrich the corner with more resources like storybooks – both store-bought and made by children).

Step 10: Reading a handout about evolving a print-rich environment

The facilitator distributes the ELI Handout 8 on Creating a Print-rich Environment in Classroom and discusses any remaining points relating to the topic.

Note:

1. You may have noticed that there are commonalities between illustrative examples 1 and 2. This shows the centrality of teaching language in a print-rich environment.
2. The content can be broken into chunks depending on the hours of engagement/mode and requirement of teachers. It is possible that teachers from other cohorts may also need some help in this content area.
3. It is important to design the sessions in a way that teachers reflect on their practices and what can be done to improve these.
4. All sessions should focus on classroom processes and practices.

Scaffolding plan for the cohort (16 hours, spread over multiple modes)			
Modes	Frequency and hours of engagement	Content and key resources	Sample questions for assessment of the cohort
VTF	VTF 1 (2 hours)	<p>1.a.² What is a print-rich environment? Why is it important at the primary level?</p> <p>1.c. Evolving a print-rich environment through some suggested activities</p>	<p>Has the teacher –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased the involvement of children with the existing print? Attempted some of the suggested activities in her classroom?
	VTF 2 (2 hours)	<p>1.b. Common misconceptions about a print-rich environment; Is it created or does it evolve during the course of teaching?</p> <p>1.c. Evolving a print-rich environment through some suggested activities</p>	<p>Has the teacher –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased her use of the board while teaching? Tried basic activities like classroom labelling and 'word wall'? Tried to create opportunities for children to engage with the new print?
1-day workshop	TLM development 1 (3 hours)	<p>1.c. Evolving a print-rich environment through some suggested activities</p> <p>1.d. Developing a rich and accessible Reading Corner</p>	<p>Has the teacher –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made efforts to implement the plan for evolving a print-rich environment in school/develop a Reading Corner? Tried to involve children with the new print?
Online support	Continuous	<p>Member –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shares material like articles and suggestions for classroom processes/practices corresponding to the content. Asks teachers to share queries or progress in the form of short sharing, photos, and videos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tried to use the suggested material in the classroom?

²Refer to section 3.4, Table: Content mapping for Need Cohort 2.

Scaffolding plan for the cohort (16 hours, spread over multiple modes)			
Modes	Frequency and hours of engagement	Content and key resources	Sample questions for assessment of the cohort
School visits	Planned visits to schools of identified teachers in the cohort	Member – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks to the teacher and discusses progress and challenges • Observes the teacher take a class, if possible • Demonstrates a few classroom processes/practices • Interacts with children for some time • Shares more storybooks, articles, worksheets, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has the teacher tried? • What further help does she require? • Will she benefit if the member demonstrates some activities?
3-day workshop	1 workshop (3 hours out of the total 18 hours)	Mixed content with a session on evolving a print-rich environment/Reading Corner in the classroom	Is the teacher able to implement learnings from the workshop in her classroom?

Note:

- This is a sample plan where the cohort is engaged for 16 hours across multiple modes.
- The plan includes visits to schools of identified teachers of the cohort and continuous online support to all teachers.
- The cohort is engaged with specific content, but other content areas are not completely ignored. The designed material and classroom processes/practices serve multiple objectives and learning outcomes, so there are overlaps. The content is not watertight.
- Teachers are also part of other cohorts. The cohorts are dynamic.
- Sample questions for assessment of the cohort are given against each interaction/engagement with the full awareness that change in classroom processes/practices takes place incrementally and over time. The questions point to the direction in which the cohort is expected to develop.

Work with a cohort with diverse needs

While we prefer to address teachers' needs through dynamic need cohorts, it may not be possible in all scenarios. Part of our work, especially the ones where we work with the government, will have teachers with mixed needs. We will need to address these group accordingly.

Another thing to add here is that in such cases, many teachers who are not known to us may also join such a group and we may not know their needs at all!

In such cases, we need to take a practical call on where to pitch the session depending on the varying needs of the teachers. We are already doing this in our different field locations, but let us understand it better with the help of an example.

Suppose we have 15 teachers who, as a group, do not work on the following practices (all priority practices)–

- 1.2. Makes planned efforts to talk using comprehensible input in order to familiarize children with the vocabulary and sentence structures of English without resorting to translation.
- 1.6. Gives children time to produce English and is patient when they make errors or mistakes.
- 2.1. Provides wholesome exposure to the English language through rhymes, songs, and poems.
- 2.3. Connects the rhymes, songs, and poems to the lives of children through wholesome conversations.
- 3.3. Tells/reads stories interactively using actions and expression.
- 3.5. Uses various storytelling techniques like taking pauses, asking children to guess what will happen next, etc.

From the remarks on the list of desired practices, we know that they do the following -

- 1. Have conversations with children largely in the local language(s).
- 2. Sing a few English rhymes and songs orally.
- 3. Teach stories by translating them into the local language(s).
- 4. Make the children copy questions and answers from the board.

The engagement plan for this group can be seen as –

Suggested content	Suggested spread of content and possible modes
Creating opportunities for oral exposure through talk, rhymes, and stories	
Importance of talk, initiating talk in the classroom, talking on topics relevant to children, encouraging children to share their views and opinions, role of comprehensible input, talking bilingually/in mixed languages vs. translation; talking about pictures, identifying keywords/phrases in English; using expressions and actions to aid comprehension; waiting for language production by children; being patient with errors and mistakes made by children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial discussions can be held in VTFs. • Specific TLMs to aid talk can be designed in one-day TLM development workshops. • Teachers can be given the task of identifying keywords and phrases in the content of textbooks. This can partially be done in a one-day workshop at the TLC/ LRC and completed as an assignment which can be shared with others in the WhatsApp group. Members can share resources like pictures and more activities in the same groups. • Members can demonstrate a few practices during visits to schools of identified teachers of the cohort.

Suggested content	Suggested spread of content and possible modes
Creating opportunities for oral exposure through talk, rhymes, and stories	
Using rhymes and stories with actions and expression, selecting good rhymes and stories relevant to children, talking about rhymes and stories, encouraging children to share their views and opinions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members can share handouts of relevant rhymes and stories and demonstrate a few rhymes and storytelling sessions in VTFs or one-day workshops at the TLC/ LRC. • Members can share audio/video clips of rhymes and more stories in WhatsApp groups. They can encourage other teachers to add their resources.
Talking about pictures/ rhymes/ stories, using conversations for modelled writing by the teacher and shared reading by children, encouraging pseudo-production of English (for example, children reciting rhymes or retelling a story), developing opportunities for children to draw and scribble or write a few words/sentences in response to conversations	This part of the discussion is slightly more nuanced and requires 2-3 meetings at regular intervals. It is best done using the content from textbooks, though any language content can be used. Members can develop oral-exposure plans for one picture, rhyme, and story as a sample and help teachers develop more plans for content which they are likely to cover in the next fortnight/month/2 months, depending on their needs.

By this time, the identified needs of the cohort may have been addressed to some extent. It is possible that a few teachers struggle to implement the ideas in their classrooms – they would need additional support. The needs of the cohort can be reassessed, and further work can be planned. Some teachers who have successfully tried a few practices may eventually become part of other cohorts, such as the one which is trying to figure out how to work on the script. There will be entries and exits of teachers as the cohorts are dynamic.

Corresponding sections in the handbook: 1.5 Objectives of Teaching English and Learning Outcomes prescribed by NCERT; the note in section 2.1.3 on the connection between oral language (oracy) and reading and writing literacy); 2.2.1 CP 1. Talk and conversation; Additional resources: *Child's Language and the Teacher* by Krishna Kumar (1986); *Children Talk Their Way Into Literacy* by Gordon Wells (2003).

3.5 Tracking Effects on Teachers' Practices and Students' Learning

Use the list of desired practices to gauge effects on teachers' practices and the Framework of Students' Learning for the students' learning.

Effects on teachers' practices

The same list and methods that have been used for need analyses for teachers will be used to track effects on teachers' practices. After we engage with the teachers as per plan, we should see if the gaps in their practices have been addressed.

After the analyses for effects, there could be two scenarios*.

Scenario 1: We see that the teacher is doing a few desired practices in the classroom, others need some work. Such a teacher moves to a different cohort/s and we design work with her, accordingly.

Scenario 2: We see that the teacher does most of the practices that we desire and does not need our support anymore. We should not unnecessarily engage with her or go to her schools for support – instead she could come to a few of our engagements and talk about how the practices we suggested have worked in her classroom. Such teachers can also present their work on different forums.

* There is a third scenario where we see no change in the teacher's practice, in which case, if we think it will help, we can let her continue in the same cohort/s or if we find that she is not motivated to do work in her classroom, we should not focus too much on her. She may continue to come to our engagements though.

Effects on students' learning

Each student learning outcome for the Early Language Stage, which have already been discussed in Chapter 1, should have a corresponding assessment process. Such assessment processes can be suggested to teachers for assessing themselves and the children in their classrooms. These will also help us assess/track if our work with teachers is leading to positive change in the learning levels of students, which can be done both formally (through periodic Learner Assessments) and informally (during school practice, interactions with children, observation of teacher's teaching, and co-teaching).

Tracking the effects on student learning will help us further identify the needs of teachers and accordingly modify our interactions with them if required. For example, we may find that teachers are able to implement certain practices or processes in their classrooms but are unable to design good assessments to see how they and their children have performed. Or we may find a few teachers who have begun to plan good assessments but are not making adequate changes in their classroom practice to realize the desired learning outcomes. There may also be some teachers who have significantly improved their classroom practice and have been able to track it well, but they have never paid attention to the desired learning outcomes! The assessment process may also help us ascertain if we need to cease

working with certain teachers entirely. Of course, such a decision cannot be based solely on tracking the effects on student learning.

Any assessment process will only work if it is aligned with the learning outcomes and teaching process/practice (pedagogy). If even one of the three is misaligned, the learning outcomes will neither be successfully achieved nor assessed. We have already discussed this alignment in Chapter 2.

Note: The assessment processes are only suggested and are by no means a comprehensive list. They should not be considered as an end-all. You are encouraged to design more assessment processes to suit their needs and help teachers do the same. Assessment processes should ideally be designed in a way that they assess multiple learning outcomes at the same time as it is neither practically possible nor desired to have a one-to-one correspondence between assessment processes and learning outcomes. You will find such processes in the suggestions given below.

3.5.1 Suggested assessment processes in Early Language Stage

Initial Phase (most LOs continue in the Later Phase)	Assessment Processes (suggested)
1. Enjoys listening to and singing English songs and rhymes with actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing a rhyme, song, or poem in English and ask children to sing along or repeat with actions. • Play the audio/video of an English rhyme, song, or poem and see if children are attracted to the sounds and rhythm and/or make attempts to mimic these.
2. Recites poems individually/in groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask children to sing any rhyme, song or poem they like (individually/in groups). • Assign responsibility to different children for singing each day. Remind them every day and give them space to come forward. • Create opportunities in the morning assembly for children to sing individually/in groups. • Take children to another class and encourage them to sing individually/in groups. • If a child hesitates to sing individually, pair her with another child or put her in a group. Do not force her to sing individually. Observe her in groups and wait for her to be ready to sing alone.
3. Names familiar objects seen in pictures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show a picture and ask children to point out and name what they see. • Take an incomplete picture and ask children to 'fill' it in with their own drawings. Ask them to point out what they see and have drawn.

Initial Phase (most LOs continue in the Later Phase)	Assessment Processes (suggested)
4. Associates words with pictures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show pairs of word and picture cards and ask children to identify the pictures, point out the word, and read it. • Show separate word and picture cards and ask children to match them. • Give pictures and ask children to label them. • Give match the following worksheets of words and pictures.
5. Carries out simple instructions such as 'Shut the door', 'Bring me the book', etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simple instructions during the normal course of teaching. • Use instructions even outside the classroom, for example, during morning assembly, midday meal, and sports period. • Play a game of simple instructions, like Simon Says.
6. Listen to English words, greetings, polite forms of expression, simple sentences; and responds in English with 'How are you?', 'I'm fine, thank you.', etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a few English words, expressions, and questions while talking to children during the normal course of teaching and encourage them to respond. • Do the same outside the English classroom as well, for example, during the morning assembly, midday meal, and sports period.
7. Produces words with common blends like 'br' 'fr' like 'brother', 'frog', etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a word that starts with the 'fr' blend, such as 'frog' and ask children to make more words. Give hints using their home language(s) to stimulate their thinking, like "Can you think of a word for your partner or classmates?" • Make word cards of different blends. Ask children to read the words aloud and categorise them. • Use short tongue-twisters or alliterative sentences with the particular blend, such as 'My brother, Brajesh, brushed his teeth and climbed the big, brown branches of the tree'. Ask children to sort the words starting with 'br', 'b', and 'tr'. • Ask children to make short tongue-twisters or alliterative sentences of their own. Let them add a few words from their own language and help them write these down for repeated reading. • Make a short story containing a few blends and read it aloud. Choose a blend and ask children to identify the corresponding words.

Initial Phase (most LOs continue in the Later Phase)	Assessment Processes (suggested)
8. Responds orally (in any language including sign language) to comprehension questions related to stories/poems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask comprehension questions while working on a story or poem using a few English words and expressions and let children respond in any language. • Take an oral quiz by dividing the class into 4 groups. Write all comprehension questions related to the story on chits and shuffle them in a box. Monitor individual performance and employ strategies to involve all children, like calling out the name of a child who has not given any answer and help her answer one question.
9. Responds to poems and stories in the form of drawings and scribbling	Ask children to scribble or draw an entire story or their favourite scene or character from the story, etc.
10. Can draw a picture with the help of oral instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a picture which you want children to draw and give them instructions to draw it using a few English words and expressions. • Conduct a short art and craft activity and ask children to follow your instructions to complete the task using available material. Use relevant English words and expressions, as, 'take a page', 'fold it into half', etc.
Later Phase	Assessment Processes (suggested)
Alphabet and Phonics	
11. Recognizes letters and their sounds (a-z)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the printed forms of rhymes, stories, etc. or the blackboard. Ask children to identify specific words and letters. Isolate a letter and ask which sound it makes. • Take a word from the printed material or the blackboard and ask children to make rhyming words (these can be nonsense words too). Isolate a particular sound and ask which letter(s) make that sound. • Pick a letter which is silent in some words, for example, 'k' in <i>knife</i> and 'e' in <i>game</i>. Ask children which sound is made or if there is no sound (silent letters). • Use clusters of letters like 'br' and 'fr' and ask children to read them aloud. Ask them to make more words with these clusters. • Also, refer to assessment processes suggested for LO 7.

Later Phase	Assessment Processes (suggested)
Reading	
12. Differentiates between small (a-z) and capital letters (A-Z) in print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask children to look at the printed form of a story or poem and point out particular small and capital letters. • Write a few sentences on the board (or use a story/rhyme chart hanging in the room) and circle the capital letters. Ask children to find corresponding small letters in the same text (the opposite can also be done). • Show separate letter cards of small and capital letters. Ask the children to match them.
13. Reads print on the classroom walls: words, poems, posters, charts, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point out specific portions of the printed material, such as a word, letter, or rhyme and help children read it. • Monitor the children's engagement with the printed material available in their classrooms – Do they take the initiative to look at it in their free time? Do they make attempts to read it and talk about it with the teacher or their friends? • Monitor children's efforts to flip through material from the Reading Corner in their free time.
14. Reads aloud with intelligible pronunciation and adequate pauses the text appropriate to her age and context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct shared-reading sessions where the teacher reads one line from a story and the children repeat after her. • Give a short, familiar text, such as a story or rhyme for independent reading. • Give a new/unfamiliar text, like a short story and encourage children to read. Help them wherever required.
15. Reads short texts in English with comprehension, i.e. can identify main idea, details and sequence in a story, etc. and draws conclusions using keywords in English.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a new/unfamiliar text, such as a short story or a rhyme and encourage children to read. Help them wherever required. Ask comprehension and inferential questions about the story and encourage children to respond using a few English words and expressions. • Let children explore material kept in the Reading Corner and talk to them about any one text. Give them time to read it in more detail and come back with more information.

Later Phase	Assessment Processes (suggested)
Oral Expression	
16. Talks about self/situations/pictures in English/bilingually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose an interesting topic which relates to the lives of children, such as games or food and talk to them about it. Encourage them to use as much English as they can. Prompt them by using English words while asking a mix of comprehension and inferential questions. • Use a real-life situation or create an imaginary situation and talk to the children about it, for example, describe a situation where two children fight while playing and ask children what they would do, why the children might be fighting, etc. Use some English and prompt them to do the same. • Show a 'big picture' with a lot of details, for example, a scene of a park or market (can use pictures from the textbook or even newspapers). Ask children to talk about it using a few English words or expressions. Ask a mix of comprehension and inferential questions to help children. Give examples of English words they can try to use while talking.
17. Responds appropriately to oral messages/elephonic communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a pretend game where someone sends the teacher a short message on her phone, such as 'Come home fast'. Ask children what the reply should be. • Ask children of another class to frame questions. Write them down on chits of paper and ask children to pick a chit and respond to it. Help them read and respond to the question using some English. Conversely, ask children to write messages to each other and play the same game. • Conduct a role-play and ask children to hold short conversations, such as between an auto-driver and a mechanic.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read/tell a story and talk to children about their favourite characters or part of the story by asking inferential and evaluative questions, such as who is your favourite character and why? What would you do if you were x character? Do you think y character did the right thing? What is z character's best quality? Suggest keywords and phrases to use in English. Alternatively, ask children to talk about a character or part of the story they did not like. • Ask children to change the story and retell it in their own words using a few words or expressions in English. • Also, refer to assessment processes suggested for LO 29.

Later Phase	
Oral Expression	Assessment Processes (suggested)
<p>19. Uses meaningful short sentences in English, orally and in writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage pseudo-production of English. Ask children to repeat a rhyme with actions or retell a story as told by the teacher. • Play a game of simple instructions where children give the instructions. • Create situations or role-plays where children get to respond using formulaic expressions, such as 'happy birthday', 'thank you', 'my name is...', and 'how are you'. • Ask children to write letters or make greeting cards for their favourite teacher, best friend or a family member. Help them write down short greetings and phrases in English.
<p>20. Uses nouns, pronouns, prepositions, adjectives, and opposites in context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a fill in the blanks worksheet of a short story where 1-2 parts of speech are left blank, for example, nouns or adjectives. This can be a bilingual story. • Tell/read a story. Ask 'who', 'what', and 'where' questions so that children use nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and prepositions contextually. Let them take the support of their home language(s) while answering but help them use the keywords in English. • Write a short story or a few sentences on the board and underline the adjectives. Read the sentences and ask children to give the opposites for the underlined words.

Later Phase	Assessment Processes (suggested)
Written Expression (towards greater accuracy in preparation for the Developing Stage)	
21. Draws or writes a few words or short sentences in response to poems and stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask children to draw their favourite scene or character from a story. Use this material for other language tasks, like labelling the pictures and captioning each picture, to retell the story in their own words. • Ask children to make a storyboard of their favourite story (pictures of each scene with captions). Give them material like paper, scale, and crayons for the task. This can be a group or pair task. • Read/tell a story and ask children to write the top 5 words that come to their mind when they think of the story, their favourite character, etc. • Ask children to think of another title for the story or poem and help them write it down.
22. Writes simple words like fan, hen, rat, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a game where children have to make a shopping list or take a survey of things they see in their classroom/outside. Let children make spelling errors. Show the correct spellings on the blackboard or write the lists on chart papers and stick them in the class. Paste the lists made by children alongside. • Show pictures and ask children to label them (can be from the textbook). • Give a dictation of a few words. Initially, let children refer to their textbooks or printed charts in the classroom and slowly let them write their own spellings. • Give a dictation of a few words. Let children invent their own spellings without referring to any print. Show the correct spellings in the printed material or the blackboard. • Read/tell a story and ask children to write their favourite words on the board or in their notebooks.
23. Writes/types dictation of words/phrases/sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to assessment processes suggested for LO 22.
24. Writes 5-6 sentences in English on personal experiences/events using verbal or visual clues [contd. in next page]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the children about an interesting topic that relates to their life, such as a village <i>mela</i> or when they helped their friend. Write down English words and expressions from the conversation on the blackboard and encourage children to write a few sentences using those. Help them frame their sentences.

Later Phase Written Expression (towards greater accuracy in preparation for the Developing Stage)	Assessment Processes (suggested)
24. Writes 5-6 sentences in English on personal experiences/events using verbal or visual clues [contd. from previous page]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show a 'big picture' with a lot of details, such as a scene of a park or market (can use pictures from the textbooks and newspapers or even photos from a school event). Ask children to talk about the picture(s) using a few English words or expressions. Write these on the blackboard and ask children to write a few sentences using them. Help them frame their sentences.
25. Composes and writes simple, short sentences with space between words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a worksheet of a picture story and ask children to caption each picture to make a story. • Give a blank comic strip and ask children to first make the dialogues orally. Ask them to write these down in the empty speech or thought bubbles. Help them frame their sentences.
26. Distinguishes between past and present times in connected speech/writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also, refer to assessment processes suggested for LO 19. • Write down the everyday routine of a child (can be from the class). Ask children to point out what the child has already done in the morning and what she is doing right now. • Take the help of a familiar story and discuss its sequence. Ask children to divide the story into as many parts as possible (depends on the story); for example, what happened first, what happened later, what happened in the end. Then, ask them to point out the sentences which helped them arrive at this conclusion.
27. Uses punctuation such as question mark, full stop and capital letters appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask children to make a list of 3 things – their favourite food, beverages, movies/TV shows, friends, teachers, etc. Ask them to write each list in the form of a sentence, for example, 'I like mangoes, bananas, and apples'. The initial sentence stems can be given in the form of a worksheet. • Take the unpunctuated version of a familiar story previously used for a read-aloud session and ask children to fill in the missing punctuation marks. Let them compare their work with the original story for self-correction and repeat this with more stories. • Give a mix of statements and questions. Ask children to add a full stop, exclamatory mark, and question mark in the appropriate places. Punctuate a few as examples. • Give a text with incorrect punctuations and ask children to correct them. • Play a game of making different noises and actions. Write these on the blackboard, for example, 'Kaboom! I am dancing!' Ask children to write similar words and sentences on the blackboard or in their notebooks.

Later Phase	Assessment Processes (suggested)
Affective (Motivation/Interest/Enjoyment, etc.)	
28. Listens with attention and interest to short texts from children's section of newspapers read out by the teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take printed material apart from the prescribed textbooks, for example, storybooks or comics to class and read them out by pointing at the text and pictures. Take the support of the home language(s) of children. Ask a mix of comprehension, inferential, and evaluative questions about the material and let children respond in any language. Also encourage children to talk about the pictures and go through the printed material without worrying about its wear and tear. Take the support of material from the Reading Corner. • Ask children to choose books from the Reading Corner which they want the teacher to read aloud to them.
29. Identifies characters and sequence of a story and asks questions about the story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read/tell a story and talk about it. Ask comprehension, inferential, and evaluative questions about the characters and sequence of the story and encourage children to respond in any language. • Ask children to retell the story in their own words or as narrated by the teacher. • Take pictures of different scenes from the story and ask children to arrange them according to the story's sequence. • Describe a character from the story and ask children to guess which character it is. Do this for all the characters. • Take-up the role of any character and ask children to frame questions they would like to ask the character, in any language. Give examples to help them get an idea about the kind of questions they can frame.
30. Takes interest in performing in events such as role-play/skit in English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign characters from a familiar story to children and help them create a monologue in English describing their appearance, interests, routine, etc. Create a dedicated slot for performing the role-plays (like a fancy dress competition). Do not assess only the performance of children, consider their efforts during the entire process of developing their role-play. • Divide children into groups and assign them characters/let them choose their own characters from a familiar story. Help them create their dialogues in English (no need to write these down; keep it oral). Give sufficient time for rehearsal till the children are ready to perform. Do not assess only the performance of children; consider their efforts during the entire process of developing their skits.

3.5.2 Suggested assessment processes in Developing Language Stage

Assessment processes that have been suggested above for each learning outcome in the Early Language Stage should help you in designing similar processes for the Developing Language Stage as well. A few examples taken from class IV learning outcomes are given below.

The learning outcomes of the Developing Language Stage are in a continuum from the Early Language Stage, only more complex. The development areas or language skills remain the same, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Children are also expected to use language in more complex ways, understand more complex language tasks dealing with critical thinking, and express themselves more creatively (both in speech and writing). We have already discussed all of this in detail in Chapter 1. You should be able to see how the suggested assessment processes of this stage compare to the earlier stage. Children are expected to work a lot more independently and respond to more critical thinking tasks.

Developing Language	Assessment Processes (suggested)
Class IV	
3. Acts according to instructions given in English, in games/sports, such as 'Hit the ball!' 'Throw the ring.' 'Run to the finish line!', etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use instructions in English even outside the English classroom, for example, during the games period, lunch break, and sports tournament. Encourage children to give instructions to each other in English too. • Use simple instructions during the normal course of teaching. • Play a game of simple instructions and also give children the opportunity to take lead and give instructions.
4. Reads independently from English storybooks, news items/headlines, advertisements, etc. Talks about it and composes short paragraphs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the children's engagement with the Reading Corner – Do they flip through books? Do they issue the books to take them home? Do they express the desire to go to the Reading Corner? Do they take the initiative to go there in their free time? • Talk to children about the material they have issued from or read from the Reading Corner and encourage them to respond in English. Ask them inferential and evaluative questions, such as 'Did they like the book?' and 'Which character did they like best and why?' Help them write a short book review based on the discussion. These can be shared in the morning assembly and stuck on the classroom walls.
5. Conducts short interviews of people around, for example, grandparents, teachers, school librarian, gardener, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask children to choose a person they would like to interview. First, ask them to develop interview questions in English. The interview can be in their home language(s) but the final report (whether oral or written) should largely be in English. • Put children in pairs and ask them to interview each other. Children can also interview their favourite teacher and write a short paragraph for the wall magazine.

Developing Language	Assessment Processes (suggested)
Class IV	
<p>9. Takes dictation for different purposes, such as lists, paragraphs, dialogues, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrate a short story or a paragraph at a reasonable pace (neither too fast nor too slow) and ask children to write it down. Repeat a line 2-3 times, if required, no more. Once done, ask children to exchange their work with their partners and give each other feedback. The original text can be put on the blackboard to help children assess their work. • Talk to children about any topic of their interest which involves making a list, such as planning a trip to a hill station or cooking their favourite dish. After talking, ask children what they would pack for the trip or the things they require for cooking the dish. Use these words for dictation. Once done, ask children to exchange their work with their partners and give each other feedback. The correct spellings can be written on the blackboard to help children assess their work. • Divide the children into pairs and ask them to give each other a dictation of 10 familiar words. Ask them to evaluate each other's work and pass their words to the next pair.
<p>11. Uses the dictionary for reference</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask children to pick 5 words from any story they like and locate those in the dictionary. • Ask children to write a list of words and give it to their partner for locating in the dictionary. • Ask children to flip through the dictionary and locate 5 new/unfamiliar words and read their meanings. Ask them to try and use these words in sentences of their own and share with the rest of the class. • Give children a slightly difficult text to read. Ask them to discuss the overall meaning and then refer to the dictionary for the exact meaning of the unfamiliar words. Talk about predicting the meanings of words without always relying on dictionaries. • Place children in groups. Ask them to collect new words they have learnt in the past one/two years and write those on slips of paper with 1-2 sample sentences on the reverse side. Ask them to arrange the words alphabetically and staple them to make their own dictionaries. Use these dictionaries for dictionary-referencing tasks (as given in the examples above).

3.6 List of 6 Desired Practices and their Sub-practices

In Chapter 1, we looked at the 6 desired practices under broad heads. We saw the sub-practices in Chapter 2. Here, we put the entire list together, in one place.

The following points should be kept in mind while using the list:

1. These practices have been defined to aid our understanding and help organize our work. They are grounded in our practice; we do not claim that this is the only way to look at English language teaching, neither does this adhere to a particular methodology.
2. The practices should be seen in the light of general principles of language learning and not in isolation, which means many of these practices come together in different ways to lead to the achievement of desired learning outcomes in children.
3. The practices are not mutually exclusive. For instance, the Reading Corner is a part of creating a print-rich environment below, but it has been called out separately, given its relative importance in our work. Working on the sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) cuts across all language content but has also been given separately.
4. Please note, it is very important that we understand why a practice is desired in a classroom. This will help us present a strong case to teachers during our work with them. This would have become clearer in Chapter 2.
5. Each practice has the same goal – children should become familiar and comfortable with the English language, understand it, and be able to use it for speaking, reading and writing. While the main purpose of oral exposure, in the beginning, is to make students familiar and comfortable with English, it also contributes to reading and writing if designed in a robust manner.
6. These practices need to be made observable and simple, so we are breaking them down into their simplest form. They may or may not occur independently.

Note: The priority sub-practices under each main practice are highlighted. They are a 'priority' because they are essential ingredients or building blocks of the main practice. The other sub-practices further enrich the main practice and make the English classroom more wholesome, but they have not been categorized as a priority for our present purposes. We should consider all the sub-practices while working with teachers but prioritize the ones which have been highlighted. Before we list the practices that we have discussed in Chapter 2, we are listing down 5 practices that are linked to the teachers' understanding of education perspective. These are independent of the subject (language, math, etc.). They are essential and core to the practice of education and are non-negotiable. It is important that these are observed and discussed with teachers where there is a need.

5 practices that are linked to the teachers' understanding of education perspective

- Does not use any form of corporal punishment, fear or intimidation in the classroom with children.
- Does not use any derogatory remarks, insensitive salutations to address learners; e.g. calling them out by their caste names, jati names, etc.
- Respects and values all learners irrespective of their caste, class, gender, religion, economic status; i.e. does not discriminate learners on any of these parameters.
- Shows patience and skill in managing diverse learner needs to support their learning; e.g. can identify learners lagging behind and give them attention, etc.
- Shows empathy towards the challenging socio-cultural context of all learners.



Desired teaching practices and sub-practices

1. Talk and conversation

- 1.1. Has wholesome conversations with children on a daily basis on topics related to their daily life experiences, contexts, interests, age, etc. using a mix of English and their home language(s).
- 1.2. Makes planned efforts to talk using comprehensible input in order to familiarize children with the vocabulary and sentence structures of English without resorting to translation.
- 1.3. Involves all children to talk about themselves and their surroundings using some English, with the support of their home language(s).
- 1.4. Asks probing questions to stimulate thinking during conversations with children, without worrying about language production.
- 1.5. Encourages children to respond to probing questions in their home language(s) (in the initial months).
- 1.6. Gives children time to produce English and is patient when they make errors or mistakes.
- 1.7. Lets children take the support of their home language(s) while using English.
- 1.8. Uses TLMs such as pictures and objects to further aid comprehension.
- 1.9. Talks animatedly with a lot of actions and expression.
- 1.10. Increases her use of English outside the English classroom; e.g. in the morning assembly and during the midday meal, using diverse inputs such as instructions and small talk.
- 1.11. Uses conversations for modelled writing (and its shared reading) to build awareness of print and practice reading in general.
- 1.12. Creates specific opportunities for children to respond to conversations through scribblings and drawings.
- 1.13. Uses conversations to practice awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) through diverse tasks.
- 1.14. Uses talk and conversations as a tool for oral assessment; e.g. by asking comprehension and inferential questions.
- 1.15. Tracks children's use of words/ expressions in English.
- 1.16. Uses feedback from assessment to develop further plans for talk and conversations.



Desired teaching practices and sub-practices

2. Introduction of rhymes, songs, and poems

- 2.1. Provides wholesome exposure to English language through rhymes, songs, and poems.
- 2.2. Uses a lot of actions, expressions, and voice modulation while reciting/ singing, for example, speeds up or slows down her pace, involves a lot of body movement, and encourages children to do the same.
- 2.3. Connects the rhymes, songs, and poems to the lives of children through wholesome conversations.
- 2.4. Uses rhymes, songs, and poems to contextually build the vocabulary of children.
- 2.5. Writes down the rhymes, songs, and poems on chart papers or the board to build awareness of print and practice reading in general.
- 2.6. Uses rhymes, songs, and poems to practice awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) through diverse tasks.
- 2.7. Introduces new rhymes, songs, and poems (apart from those prescribed in the textbook) which connect to the daily life experiences, contexts, interests, age, etc. of children.
- 2.8. Creates specific opportunities for children to respond to rhymes, songs, and poems through scribbles and drawings.
- 2.9. Uses rhymes, songs, and poems as the basis for writing – initially letting children respond through scribbling and drawing then progressing to writing a few words or sentences through shared, guided, and independent writing tasks.
- 2.10. Creates multiple opportunities to assess the pseudo-production of English by children e.g. Are children able to recite the rhyme with actions and expression? Are children able to use key words/ expressions in English?
- 2.11. Checks oral comprehension of rhymes, songs, and poems by asking a mix of comprehension and inferential questions.
- 2.12. Creates multiple opportunities to assess reading (from identifying words to independent reading) using the printed forms of rhymes, songs, and poems.
- 2.13. Assesses the written responses to rhymes, songs, and poems through planned written assignments (from drawing and scribbling to independent writing).
- 2.14. Uses feedback from assessment to develop further plans for working on rhymes, songs, and poems.



Desired teaching practices and sub-practices

3. Storytelling and read-aloud

- 3.1. Conducts storytelling/read-aloud sessions through dedicated slots in the English period (preferably on a daily basis).
- 3.2. Uses an appropriate mix of storytelling and read-aloud sessions.
- 3.3. Tells/reads stories interactively using actions and expression.
- 3.4. Encourages children to try telling/reading stories with actions and expressions.
- 3.5. Uses various storytelling techniques like taking pauses, asking children to guess what will happen next, etc.
- 3.6. Holds conversations about the story through a mix of comprehension and inferential questions (over time, the questions become more critical and the use of language also becomes more complex e.g. in classes IV and V).
- 3.7. Uses stories to contextually build the vocabulary of children.
- 3.8. Uses stories to practice awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) through diverse tasks.
- 3.9. Writes down the stories on big books, story charts or the board to build awareness of print and practice reading in general.
- 3.10. Introduces new stories (apart from those prescribed in the textbook) which connect to the daily life experiences, contexts, interests, age, etc. of children.
- 3.11. Creates specific opportunities for children to participate in/design role-plays and skits for deeper engagement with stories.
- 3.12. Uses stories as the basis for writing – initially letting children respond through scribbling and drawing then progressing to writing a few words or sentences through shared, guided, and independent writing tasks.
- 3.13. Uses a mix of comprehension and inferential questions to assess children's comprehension of the story (both oral and written).
- 3.14. Creates multiple opportunities to assess the pseudo-production of English by children e.g. Are children able to retell the story as given? Are children able to use key words/expressions in English?
- 3.15. Checks oral comprehension of stories through talk and conversations by asking a mix of comprehension and inferential questions.
- 3.16. Creates multiple opportunities to assess reading (from identifying words to independent reading) using the printed forms of stories.
- 3.17. Assesses the written responses to stories through planned written assignments (from drawing and scribbling to independent writing).
- 3.18. Uses feedback from assessment to develop further plans for working on stories.



Desired teaching practices and sub-practices

4. Creating and using a print-rich environment

- 4.1. Evolves a dynamic (frequently changing) print-rich environment in the classroom using relevant material which is either store-bought or self-made or made by children during the course of teaching.
- 4.2. Creates the print material at low cost with locally available resources so that it can be easily replicated for other children/classrooms.
- 4.3. Places the print material at the eye-level of children or in accessible spaces so that they can independently engage with it.
- 4.4. Exposes children to books other than the prescribed English textbooks; e.g. storybooks, comics, and picture dictionaries.
- 4.5. Plans activities for children to engage with the print material so that the material is not merely displayed for decoration.
- 4.6. Encourages children to independently engage with the print material without being too worried about its wear and tear.
- 4.7. Uses the print material to build awareness of print and practice reading in general.
- 4.8. Uses the print material to practice awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics) through diverse tasks.
- 4.9. Uses the print material as the basis for writing - initially letting children respond through scribbling and drawing then progressing to writing a few words or sentences through shared, guided, and independent writing tasks.
- 4.10. Takes the support of the print material to create multiple opportunities for assessing reading (from identifying words to independent reading).
- 4.11. Takes the support of the print material to create multiple opportunities for assessing writing (from drawing and scribbling to independent writing).
- 4.12. Assesses the children's interaction with the print material to develop further plans for making the classroom print-rich.



Desired teaching practices and sub-practices

5. Developing awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics)

- 5.1. Plans specific opportunities for children to build awareness of print and practice reading in general using the written/printed forms of talk, conversations, rhymes, songs, poems, stories, etc. given in the textbooks, classroom print, board, etc.
- 5.2. Draws attention to the sounds and letters in the printed/written material through diverse tasks to practice the awareness of sounds (phonological awareness) and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).
- 5.3. Plans specific opportunities for children to journey from scribbling and drawing to independent writing (includes inventive spellings).
- 5.4. Lets children make errors/mistakes in spellings/ punctuation/ grammar (the focus on accurate spellings/punctuation/grammar gradually increases in classes IV and V through diverse exposures, and even then, the teacher is gentle and encouraging while correcting).
- 5.5. Creates multiple opportunities to assess children's awareness of print, awareness of sounds (phonological awareness), and sound-letter correspondence (phonics).
- 5.6. Uses feedback from assessment to develop further plans for working on the script.



Desired teaching practices and sub-practices

6. Establishing Reading Corners

- 6.1. Establishes a rich and accessible reading corner containing age-appropriate, contextual, and interesting material for children (apart from the prescribed textbooks) so that they develop their awareness of print and practice reading in general.
- 6.2. Creates specific opportunities for children to share what they have read and carries the conversation forward by asking a mix of comprehension and inferential questions (over time, the questions become more critical and the use of language also becomes more complex in classes IV and V).
- 6.3. Plans dedicated slots in the timetable for children to engage with the reading corner through storytelling, read-aloud, free reading and sharing, etc.
- 6.4. Connects conversations and resources from the reading corner to the content of the textbooks e.g. for planned reading and writing tasks.
- 6.5. Takes the support of material from the reading corner to create multiple opportunities for assessing reading (from identifying words to independent reading).
- 6.6. Takes the support of material from the reading corner to create multiple opportunities for assessing writing (from drawing and scribbling to independent writing).
- 6.7. Assesses the children's interaction with the material to further develop the reading corner.

Conclusion

This handbook is an attempt to provide a blueprint for working with teachers in English language teaching at the primary level. It lays down our approach, based on key learnings from our work in the field, and details teacher practices that lead to better student learning. Many of our members have worked hard to crystallize some doable practices when it comes to teaching English in government schools. In conceptualizing these, we have also borrowed from other organizations with experience in this domain.

We have refined our own understanding of English language teaching over the years. Our approach is guided not just by a theoretical understanding of the underlying principles of second language learning but also by the pressing concern of what works best in our field contexts, given the challenges faced by teachers and learners. This long and deliberate journey further highlights that we must take cognizance of these challenges and design teacher engagement plans that are well-suited to the needs of our teachers.

The feat of codifying our work was possible because of the efforts put in by a dedicated team, which was guided along the way by feedback from members in different field locations. The true test of the handbook is its use in the field while designing work with teachers. Your feedback and suggestions will therefore be critical in further improving the next version of the handbook, which we hope to release next year.

Here's hoping that you will find the handbook a useful and practical guide that provides valuable insights for the road ahead!

Acknowledgements and Attributions

Bringing out a document of this kind takes the collective efforts of several people. Here, we would like to acknowledge their support and guidance.

This handbook is possible because of the rich field experiences of our members in different field locations, chiefly because of the whole-hearted support of innumerable teachers and functionaries who trust us, dialogue with us, and tread along with us. Special thanks to teachers and functionaries for also granting permission to use photographs from the school space. All of these experiences are our collective wisdom and continually shape our work with teachers in the field. Many members have been instrumental in realizing this first version of our handbook through continuous support and feedback.

We are also profusely thankful to the Early Literacy Initiative for their comprehensive yet lucid handouts and practitioner briefs. They have been our lighthouse. This attempt to codify our work in the area of early language is placed steadfastly in the global paradigm of comprehensive literacy, for which we shall be ever grateful to scores of practitioners, researchers, thinkers, and organizations who are too many to name here individually.

Lastly, we are most deeply thankful to all those who are working in the area of early literacy and have made their resources free and accessible for all.

Figure 12 and Figure 15

Outer circle: Process Step Curved Arrows vector designed by www.vecteezy.com

Figure 24

The Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework (Fisher and Frey, 2013).

Figure 36

2-page illustration from the old state-board Hindi textbook of Rajasthan (RSTB).

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Figure 4

Scene at a tea shop, dog chasing a man by Priya Kuriyan, for *It's All the Cat's Fault!* written by Anushka Ravishankar, published by StoryWeaver (©StoryWeaver, 2015) under a CC BY 4.0 license on StoryWeaver.

Figure 63

Market Mayhem by Soumya Menon (©Soumya Menon), published under a CC BY 4.0 license on StoryWeaver.



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