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## **UNIT 3 : LANGUAGE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

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### **3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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After going through this unit you will be able to -

- conceptualize the meaning of the term ‘language’, ‘education’ and ‘curriculum’;
- explain the language used in education and curriculum;
- discuss the significance of language learning and how it is different from the process of learning through language;
- describe the various functions of language, mainly inside the classroom and outside the classroom.

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### **3.2 INTRODUCTION**

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As the heading of the unit suggests, there are two key words, viz, ‘Language’ and ‘Curriculum.’ Before proceeding ahead, the students should be made acquainted with the meaning of these two words.

‘Language’ refers to those sounds and written symbols through which

human communicate. A language is a vehicle to exchange thought, ideas, views etc. among people or among different communities in different parts of the world. It is only a language which plays the key role in a teaching-learning process. We can use language to refer to various means of communication involving recognizable symbols, non-verbal sounds or actions. In this present unit, language refers to those set of sounds and written symbols that are used in communication in education and curriculum.

Now, come to the next term 'curriculum.' This term has a close relation with 'education' (in the next section we shall discuss it in detail). It will be beneficial for the students to know the meaning of 'education' to know the term 'curriculum' more clearly.

The term 'education' is derived from the Latin words 'educare' and 'educere.' 'Educare' means 'to nourish', 'to bring up', 'to rise.' So, education means to nourish or bring up the children according to certain aims or ends, whereas 'educere' means 'to lead out', 'to draw out.' This means educating a child implies drawing out a child from darkness to light. From the above two definitions, we can say that education is a system or process to enlighten the minds and shape the character of the students in a desired direction.

The term 'curriculum' is derived from the Latin word 'currere' which means 'to run' or 'race course'. Thus, curriculum means a runway, a course which runs to reach a goal. So, curriculum embodies all the experiences which are utilized by the school or college to attain the aims of education.

So, you have got some ideas on language, education and curriculum. Now, you can move to the next section with a certain clarity to comprehend the terms and their interrelationship.

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### **3.3 LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM**

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In the 'Introduction' section, you have already acquired some idea about language, education and curriculum. In this section, before proceeding further, we shall briefly discuss the relationship of education and curriculum. It will help you to go deeper in the text of this section.

We can not discuss education without curriculum and curriculum without education. Curriculum and education are inseparable. Aims of

education are realised through the medium of curriculum. Education has two broad aims, viz, *Individual* and *Social*. The Individual aims lay emphasis on the balanced development of the Individual. Social aims are directed towards the development of social qualities in the individual which should lead to his social efficiency and cultural development. These aims can be realised by providing the pupils with certain experiences in the form of knowledge, skill and traits, which constitute the content of curriculum. To a large extent, this can only be realised and practised through a good amount of furnished language in formal situations like inside the classroom, in the laboratory, in library etc.

It will be worth mentioning here that the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) has enlarged the area of curriculum by suggesting that a curriculum should include all the activities inside and outside the classroom which help the students in learning and developing their mind and character. Now, curriculum does not mean only the academic subjects traditionally taught in the school; it includes the totality of experiences that a pupil receives through the manifold activities that are performed in the school, in the classroom, library, workshop, playground and in a number of informal contact between the teachers and the pupils. By keeping in mind the views propagated by the Commission, we can say that with this present concept and idea of curriculum and education, the functions and the role of language in education and curriculum are gradually increasing assuming greater significance. Let us discuss this more elaborately.

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### 3.3.1 Significance of Language in Education and Curriculum

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**Creole-** a language formed from a combination of European language and another language.

Language works as a medium between the learners and teachers. Hence, the importance of language in Education and Curriculum is undoubtedly vital. In that sense, language is a tool for learning and an aid to understanding. Generally, before going to school, a child learns to talk and communicate in his/her mother-tongue (LM). His/her mother-tongue may be a dialect, or a **creole** or even one not in a very standard form. It depends on the environment

to which the child belongs. But, the language used in an education system is totally different from those discussed above. In a formal educational set up, emphasis is given on the use of the standard form of a language and in the use of a language for educational purpose the policy-makers or the course designers have to look at the utility of the language from different angles. Generally, the standard form of a language, approved by the Government is selected as the medium of instruction in a course of education. The selected language may be a regional language, a national language, or an international language. It depends on the demand, utility and needs of the students as well as the aims and objectives of the education system.

Another important point to mention here is that the standard of the language used in education should match the level of the standard of the students. If it is mis-matched, all efforts will go in vain. The language used for the students of higher secondary level must be different from the language used for the students of class V.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q 1:** What kind of language should be incorporated in an education system? (30 words)

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India is a country where thousands of dialects and language are used in its different corners. Apart from the mother-tongues of most of the communities, the country has officially recognised Hindi as the National language in the form of Hindi and a third language (L<sub>3</sub>) or international link language in the form of English. In such a context, it becomes a complex issue for the educationists and designers of educational courses to choose a common suitable and useful language for the students from the different communities and

regions of the country. Now, we are living in the era of globalization where the world has already turned into a small village due to the advancement of science and communication. In communication, English is the only language which is used world-wide. So, we can not ignore the usefulness of English in our education and curriculum. At the same time, we can not ignore the importance of the mother-tongues of the students too.

The language selected for education as a medium should enable students to acquire knowledge with facility of expression so that they can communicate with clarity of thinking. From this point of view the use of mothertongue is most desirable.

However, the importance of Hindi as a national link language. It is the official language can not be denied. It is the link language between Union and the people. So, for the students knowledge of the national language is also important.

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### **3.3.2 Language in Curriculum**

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Though education and curriculum are not separable, yet, in practice, the field of curriculum is different to some extent in the use of language. From our discussion we have already come to know that curriculum includes all the activities that take place inside and outside the classroom within the school-campus.

In the context of curriculum language is important for comprehension and for making use of knowledge. In the process of exchange of ideas between the teacher and the student, or among the students language is the chief medium.

In the last 30 years, a number of educationalists have been emphasizing the vital role of language in a curriculum, i.e., in learning, particularly the role of verbal communicational talk in the classroom and within the school campus. The teacher talks to his students and vice versa. Similarly, students also talk among themselves. This is where language plays its role. Effective learning takes place when there is a perfect communication between the teacher and the students.

Any disparity in this respect is seen as a hindrance to learning. The teacher should talk in a way that can be exploratory and thought provoking. The effectiveness of the language is totally dependent on the efficiency and capacity of the teachers in using language in a particular context. The teacher has to be very careful while communicating with the students in respect to their age group, mind-set, the objectivity of that particular talk etc.



**CHEEK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q 2:** How is the language of curriculum different from that of Education? (30 words)

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### 3.4 LEARNING LANGUAGE AND LEARNING THROUGH LANGUAGE

We have already discussed language in the introduction part of this unit. Language has a very important social purpose, because it is mainly used for linguistic communication. Before going to school, a child learns to talk in mother tongue (LM) or in the first language (L<sub>1</sub>) at home in a normal environment. A child starts speaking in his/her mother tongue or in the first language long before going to school. Now, let us briefly discuss mother tongue, the first language and other languages to know about learning language as well as how learning takes place through language.

Mother-tongue is that language which is acquired by a child from his/her parents. Mother tongue is the first language in which a child learns to speak first. A child learns to use the speech-sounds of his/her mother tongue by imitating or following the speeches, used by parents or other family members in a normal environment. The mother-tongue is considered the first language of a child. In the hierarchy of language learning, a child first learns to speak in his/her mother tongue. So, it ranks first in that hierarchy. Hence, it is called the first language of the child. In place of

'learning', the term 'acquisition' is more suitable and applicable to define the learning process of mother-tongue or first language. Learning is a deliberate or mechanical process. But, the learning of mother-tongue or first language takes place in a normal environment, where a child acquires the required skills of using mother-tongue or first language spontaneously. So, it is better to be called 'mother tongue or first language acquisition' rather than 'mother tongue or first language learning.' In the process of acquisition of mother tongue, a child needs not follow any method or formula of language learning. But, in learning other languages apart from the mother-tongue or first language, a deliberate effort is required. Generally, a child begins to learn other languages apart from the mother-tongue in the school campus itself.

In teaching and learning of other languages, the teachers or language trainers use some strategies and scientific techniques to train up the students in that specific language. The approaches and methods used for the purpose are rather mechanical. In learning a language, say for example English, different methods or approaches can be used for making the students learn better. Some of the methods and approaches are:

- grammar translation method
- direct approach
- natural approach
- cooperative language learning
- communicative language teaching

These methods and approaches are used most frequently in learning a language. During the twentieth century new methods of language have proliferated and the process is still going on.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 3:** How does the process of learning mother tongue differ from the process of learning other languages? (20 words)

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**Q 4:** Name three methods or approaches of learning a language.  
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**Learning through language:**

Learning through language is another process or phenomenon which is different from learning a language. In the process of learning through language a language is used as the medium of instruction. In the discussion of language and education, language is usually defined as a shared set of verbal codes such as English, Spanish, Hindi etc. But, language can also be defined as a generic, communicative phenomenon, especially in the description of instruction.

Teachers and students use both spoken and written language to communicate with each other to present the tasks, engage in learning processes, present academic content, assess learning, display knowledge and skills and to build classroom life. The students learn to read and write (academic written language) and they learn the discourse of academic disciplines with the help of a language which is used as the medium of instruction.

Learning in classroom is primarily accomplished through language. Teachers deliver lecture, ask questions, orchestrate discussions and assign reading and writing tasks through language. Students are engaged in academic tasks through reading, writing, giving verbal answers to teachers' questions, listening to teachers' lectures, participating in peer-works or group discussion, memorizing the written texts etc.; all these take place through a language, used as a medium of instruction. So, we can say that in 'learning through language', learning takes place with the help of language, where the language is used as the medium of instruction.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q 5:** What do you understand by learning through language?  
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### 3.5 FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

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#### Three basic functions :

Language is the chief medium of communication. Without language we cannot imagine a civilized human society. Language functions in many different ways but there are three main functions: informaton, expressive and performative.

**(i) Informative:** The most familiar function is *informative*, i.e, it transmits information from person to person both in oral form or in written form. Let us look at the following expression.

- The teacher says to the students, “Tomorrow is a holiday.”
- The Shopkeeper says to the customer, “It takes rupees twenty per piece.”

In both of the above instances the language transmits information from the speaker to the hearer. And, if the mentioned information is displayed through notice-board, the language transmits the information in written form. The language used in Newspapers is mainly informative in nature.

**(ii) Expression:** Another basic function of language is *expressive*. Words can be used to evoke an emotion that is a direct result of their meaning. Poetry often deals with expressive language.

“In the heart of seed,  
Buried, deep, so deep,  
A dear little plant  
Lay fast asleep.”

(“The little plant” by K.L. Brown)

In the above lines, the language is used expressively. In these verses of rhythms and sounds, the words are expressive in themselves. The language used here is so expressive that it evokes emotion in the minds of readers.

**(iii) Performative:** The third area of language is ceremonial in nature. Here, the words are not necessarily either informative or expressive, but *performative*, they perform an action in themselves. Look at the following expression:

“I thank you.”

“I apologize for that crime.” –

In the above lines, the language of the speakers performs the acts of ‘thanking’ and ‘apologizing.’ It is a performative use of the language by the speaker.

Basically, language performs the above discussed three functions, viz, informative, expressive and performative. There is perhaps nothing more subtle than language is, and nothing has as many different uses as language has. Without doubt, identifying just these three basic functions is an over simplification of the functions of language.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q 6:** What are the three basic functions of language?

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### 3.5.1 Functions of Language inside the Classroom

Each of the three basic function of language has a significant role to play inside the classroom . Inside a classroom, communication occurs between the teacher and the students. The language used by teachers and students is mostly formal in a normal classroom situation. The teacher has to use *informative* language (to give information), *expressive* language (to discuss the text of a literary work) and *performative* language (to make the students practice different modes of communication) inside a classroom. Here, the functions of language is realised both orally and in written form. In a teacher-student relationship, we can discuss the functions of language from two dimensions;(a) from teacher’s point of view (b) from the learners’ or students’ point of view.

**(a) From teacher’s point of view:**

From the angle of the teacher, the language functions in different ways –

- It helps the teacher to give information to the students. The teacher gives information by way of discussing the contents

of the subject. There are different objectives of teaching such as helping students in developing their character, making them familiar with the syllabus and examination procedures and solving the problems of the students while performing all these tasks the teacher has to use language.

- Language also has a useful function in making the teacher understand the mood of the students. He can analyze the language used by the students and by doing this the mood of the students can be understood.
- Again language is the most useful means for a teacher to transfer everything to the students what the teacher aims to teach.

**(b) From students' point of view:**

If we look the functions of language from the student's point of view, we arrive at the following points.

- Students get to know what is being taught through a language. The teacher imparts knowledge to the students by means of a verbal communication and on his part a student learns what he is taught through the language of communication.
- In a group discussion or in pair-works, the students have to discuss and share their ideas and views with fellow students through a language.
- The students have to use language to ask questions to the teacher to clear their doubts.
- Lastly, the students have to sit for examination which is supposed to test their knowledge. They use language to answer question and to prove their proficiency in a subject.

One important aspect in this respect is that the contents and lessons of the prescribed subjects are furnished in written language. In this context, the function of language inside a classroom is very significant. Hence, the written language functions as a store house of knowledge for the students.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 7:** How does language work inside a classroom? (30 words)

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#### **3.5.2 Functions of Language outside the Classroom**

Outside the classroom, the students face a broader field, where they need to communicate with different persons in different situations and environments. Hence, language has been even more important function outside the classroom in comparison to its functions inside the classroom. Students must acquire the basic social language skill outside the class, either through independent study or by interacting with other speakers. Students have to ask and answer questions about themselves, about their families and friends, the food they like, the weather, what they did yesterday and so on. Naturally language has to operate huge range of functions outside the classroom.

For example, language is used to tell a story, for making a speech, to play a part, to imagine, to soothe, to ask, to deceive, to demonstrate one's feelings and in endless other ways. So, when it comes to talking about what language does, you need to be aware that language actually functions in a variety of ways, each of which may have slightly different rules of behaviour.

Outside the classroom, the learners or students can implement what they learn inside the classroom. Inside the classroom, a student learns how to greet the teacher by using "Good morning, sir" or "Good evening, madam"; how to take permission by using "May I come in" etc. A student can also use this knowledge of greetings outside the classroom by addressing a neighbour as, "Good morning, uncle." In this way, a learner learns to use different words and phrases which are performatory in nature and can be used outside the classroom. The students learn to congratulate one

on his/her success by saying “I congratulate you on your success”; similarly, they use “thank you”, “I welcome you”, “I promise you”, “I warn you” etc. to express themselves in different contexts outside the classroom.

The **informative** functions of language can explicitly be realised outside the classroom with the presence and availability of newspapers, journals, magazines etc. By going through them, a student or a person can acquire information relating to different topics.

Besides, the language functions miscellaneously. For example, in buying a shirt, (“what is the price of that blue shirt?”); in bargaining the price of onion in the market, (“It is too high, could you not sell it at a reasonable rate?”); in paying the bus fare to the conductor, (“Please take it. I shall get off at Chandmari.”); to ask for a cup of tea at the tea-shop, (“Give me a special cup of tea.”)

There are other uses of language such as to enquire about railway reservation, to call a doctor, to invite people for marriage and other functions, or a party at home etc. Thus these hundreds of ways in which language functions as a medium in our day to day life and outside the classroom.

We can say that a language, in a sense, defines a society. Speakers of the same dialect share an immediate sense of recognition. In addition, the traditions, myths, and religions of every human society are encoded in their languages. Finally, science itself, human’s ultimate adoptive too, is based on human language.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q 8:** What are the roles of language outside the classroom? (20 words)

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## 3.6 LET US SUM UP

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- We have acquired some ideas in detail on language in general and how language works in a society in particular.
- Attempts have also been made to familiarize you with the importance and significance of language in education and curriculum with stress laid on what is language learning and how it is different from learning through language.
- We have done a detailed discussion on the different functions of language inside classroom and outside the classroom, and in the society at large, focus the multiple use of this means of human communication.



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## 3.7 FURTHER READINGS

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- 1) Bhatia, K.K. (2011). *Foundation of Educational Theories and Principles*. New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers,
- 2) Platt, John T. and Platt, Heidi K.(1975.). *The Social Significance of Speech*; Amsterdam North-Holland.
- 3) Richards, Jack C. and Rodgers, Theodore S.(2007) . *Approaches and methods in Language Teaching* (Second edition). U.K.Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



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## 3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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**Ans to Q No 1:** The standard form of language should be incorporated in an education system. Besides that the language which is used should match the level of competency of the students.

**Ans to Q No 2:** Since education and curriculum are inseparable, it is difficult to differentiate the language of curriculum from that of education. Basically, the language of curriculum is used to attain the goals set by the language of education.

**Ans to Q No 3:** The learning of mother tongue takes place spontaneously, while the learning of other languages need deliberate efforts.

**Ans to Q No 4:** ● Grammar-translation method

- Direct approach
- Communicative language teaching

**Ans to Q No 5:** Learning through language refers to that learning which requires a language to perform the role of medium of instruction.

**Ans to Q No 6:** ● Informative

- Expressive and
- Performative

**Ans to Q No 7:** Inside a classroom, language is mainly used to share ideas between the teacher and the students. Teacher uses language to give the students knowledge and students use language to earn knowledge.

**Ans to Q No 8:** Outside the classroom the language has to perform miscellaneous roles, where most of its roles are informative and performative in nature.



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## 3.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

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### (A) Very Short Questions

- Q 1:** What is a language?
- Q 2:** How do you define curriculum?
- Q 3:** What do you understand by mother tongue?
- Q 4:** What is the main function of language?
- Q 5:** Which is the official language of India?
- Q 6:** What is 'acquisition of language'?
- Q 7:** Name one characteristic feature of mother tongue.
- Q 8:** What is the role of language in the process of learning through language?

### (B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

- Q 1:** What is the relation between education and curriculum ?
- Q 2:** How is language used in curriculum ?
- Q 3:** Define 'learning language.'
- Q 4:** Why is learning of mother tongue different from the learning of other languages ?
- Q 5:** Describe briefly the term 'learning through language'.
- Q 6:** What are the three basic functions of language ?

### (C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

- Q 1:** Discuss the role of language in education and curriculum.
- Q 2:** 'In the process of learning through language, a language is used as the medium of instruction.' – Explain.
- Q 3:** What are the three basic functions of language? How can these functions be realised inside a classroom?
- Q 4:** Discuss with suitable examples the functions of language outside the classroom.

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