CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction:

1.1.0 In recent years, in India as in other developing countries, there has been a growing concern about slum children, who are poor, malnourished, and who are brought up in the unhealthy, un-stimulating environment of the slums.

1.1.1 The dictionary meaning of 'slum' is "a thickly populated street or alley marked by squalor or wretched living" (Webster, 1953). It is a "congested urban or suburban residential district characterised by deteriorating and unsanitary housing" (Encyclopaedia Brittanica Vol. IX, 1970). In New York, in 1930, James Ford had made a thoroughgoing examination of the slums in the United States. He summarises his definition as follows -

"The slum is a residential area in which the housing is so deteriorated, so substandard or so unwholesome as to be a menace to the health, safety, morality or welfare of the occupants."¹

In 1931, a group of leaders who had been brought together to consider housing problems in New York,
expressed themselves in these strong words:

"We think of the slums as the abode of half-starved, filthy clothed children, of diseased and crippled individuals, a place of poverty, wretchedness, ignorance and vice." 2

In America a slum is more than an economic condition. It is a social phenomenon in which, the attitudes, ideas, ideals and practices play an important part. David Hunter 3 (1968) has pointed out some eighteen identifiable features of the slum problem. Some of them are -

1. poverty,
2. rundown housing,
3. crowding,
4. concentration of lower class people,
5. racial concentration,
6. concentration of people of low educational achievement, low skill and cultural limitation,
7. crimes,
8. health problems,
9. broken homes,
10. language problems.
The Americans are very pessimistic about the slum problem because they see it as a social problem. But in the Indian context, slums have largely resulted from the process of industrialization. People migrated from different rural areas to the urban areas for securing jobs, for earning their livelihood and settled in any available open space to build a hut. It is, however, unplanned industrialisation and development. The people living in these slums are mostly illiterate or merely literate, unskilled workers. "The people living in these slums are denied the basic gifts of nature i.e. air and light. They live in dingy and dilapidated buildings without any sanitation." (Jaya Singh, 1979).

1.1.2 "The size of the slum population in India is growing at an alarming rate. According to the Sixth Plan document, nearly one-fifth of the urban population is estimated to constitute slum population. The conditions in Pune City (that is the Poona Municipal Corporation area) are not only in tune with the national choir but they excel it. According to the 1981 census, the population of Pune city is 12 lakhs, of which roughly 3.5 lakhs constitute the slum dwellers living in seventy thousand huts in more than 327 continuous, clustered or isolated hutment colonies usually referred to as slums."
Thus 29% of the city population are living in slums. This shows high slum proneness of Pune City.\(^5\)

The different surveys undertaken by Poona Municipal Corporation show the increase as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of huts</th>
<th>Number of slum dwellers</th>
<th>% of slum dwellers to city population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>6300</td>
<td>31500</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>17000</td>
<td>85000</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>54000</td>
<td>2.7 lakhs</td>
<td>-&quot;-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>70000</td>
<td>3.5 lakhs</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, in the last thirty years, the population of the city has increased two and half times, whereas the number of huts has increased over ten times and the percentage of slum dwellers in the city population has gone from 6% to 29%.

"The sixth plan held that a particular area becomes a slum not because of its structure but because of its environment and insanitation." (Thombre 1982)\(^6\). Therefore, the Government of India and the Maharashtra State Government also took very seriously the problem of the slum population and looked into the matters of slum improvement and started programmes such as the
environmental improvement programmes. The Poona Municipal Corporation took some steps for housing, clearance of slums, health and sanitation, and education of the slum children.

According to available data from a housing survey of 1970, 59% of the workers in the slum area are from the unorganised sector and their occupations include construction of buildings, coolies, petty trade and so on. It is rather significant to note that for 80% of them, income fell below Rs. one hundred and seventy five per month. Out of these, 46% of the earning members were getting Rs. 100/-.

1.1.3 Aphale has shown that the children in slums are reared in a very unhealthy way. They are brought up in all sorts of difficulties arising out of poor economic conditions and cultural backwardness. There is hardly any arrangement for pre-school education. The progress of children in pre-school period is not watched. No help is given by the parents to their school going children in their studies. Male parents are hardly looking after the children."
Comparing the slum child with the middle class child, in America, Hechinger also has pointed out "the middle class home is child-oriented, parents dote on their infants' first words. Middle class parents welcome and encourage questions, exploration, whereas the slum home is a place of little opportunity for infants to talk, question and seek answers. In an over-crowded tenement curiosity is a nuisance. In day time, adults are out for their earnings and the children are either left to their older brothers or sisters or with the least competent women. When the parents return, after the frustration of a day in the slum dweller's life, the atmosphere hardly encourages much concern with child care. There is little patience with childish talk. The passive child is considered the good child." 9

Thus a favourable atmosphere is not created in a slum home for the child's development. The child in the slum area is devoid of nutritious food, a clean environment, good living conditions, healthy stimulation and experiences. He is a 'deprived' child.

1.1.4 A number of free primary schools have been opened by Poona Municipal Corporation (henceforth referred to as PMC) in different parts of the city.
especially near the permanent slum establishments. It is compulsory for each and every child who is completing his sixth year to enrol in the school nearest to his residence. Primary education in PMC schools is from Standard I to Standard VII. Standard I to Standard IV is lower primary, and Standard V to Standard VII is upper primary. Education for four years in lower primary school is free and compulsory, whereas upper primary education is also free but not compulsory. There are a number of schools organised by private organisations also. But the education in these schools is not free. The main difference between these two types of schools is that a child is required to pay fees in the private school whereas the PMC school gives free education. Due to this aspect of fee paying, there is a marked difference between these two types of schools. Those who can afford to pay fees go to private schools and those who come from poor families go to Corporation schools.

Children can therefore, be divided into -

1) those coming from better socio-economic background, (non-deprived children), who go to private schools, and

2) those from poor socio-economic background, (deprived children), who go to Corporation schools.
During my career as a teacher-educator in a college of education in Poona, I have visited both types of schools a number of times during each working year to supervise practice lessons of pupil-teachers. This included different Corporation schools in the Parvati area, Nana Peth, Vadargadi, Burud Ali and other parts of the city of Pune, and private schools like Nutan Marathi Vidyalaya, Bhave School, Navin Marathi School, St. Helena's Primary School, H.H.C.P. Primary School, Adarsh Primary School, Abhinav Primary School, in Pune City. In the course of these visits there were many occasions to observe the students from morning till evening in the class-room situation, in the play situation, in quarrel situation, and some differences in both types of children were particularly noticed.

1. When the teacher was giving information or asking questions, the children in the Corporation schools kept quiet, and did not show any expression, or feelings on their faces. Private school students showed much inquisitiveness when they were given some information, or were asked questions. They were eager to answer the questions.
2. The students in the private school listened attentively to what the teacher was saying whereas Corporation school children were found to be restless. They seemed to lack concentration power and after a while started quarrelling among themselves.

3. It was also observed that the students in the Corporation schools had a weak vocabulary, seemed incapable of giving full answers, did not give answers in full sentences. They seemed deficient in comprehending and expressing ideas. They did not interact with the teacher. They did not participate in classroom interaction, but continually quarrelled with classmates. As against these children, private school children were found to be quick in comprehension, expression, and narration. They had with them a good stock of vocabulary. They had no problem of expressing the ideas. They were accustomed to speaking in full sentences. Their verbs were grammatically appropriate and clear.

It was observed that there was a basic difference in the language development in each of the categories of children. Kellmer Pringle has pointed out, "Language development is seriously affected by deprivation than any other aspect of development". The investigator also endorses these views, because of her own experiences.
1.1.6 As language is a mediator of academic development, the limited language development of the deprived children hampers their school learning. Over and above this, the Government has prescribed the same books, same syllabus, same curriculum for both categories of children coming from good home background and coming from deprived background.

I came to believe in the course of my career that 'observation' is not a sufficiently scientific method for coming to conclusions about language deficiency among poor children but there should be a research basis for saying that "deprivation affects language ability". What is that deprivation? In what ways does it affect the educational career of a child? It was felt that a detailed study of aspects of deprivation should be undertaken to find out the relation between factors of deprivation and aspects of language ability.

1.2.0 Theoretical Framework and purpose of the Study:

The main purpose of the present investigation is to find out:

1) whether deprivation affects language ability of the children in PMC schools, and

2) which aspect of deprivation affects the language ability of the child.
The brief framework of the study to serve the above purpose is presented here.

The study is divided into five parts:

1. locating the level of deprivation of the children,
2. measuring the language ability of the children,
3. finding the relation between the level of deprivation and language ability,
4. locating the most detrimental factor for language development,
5. finding out the effect of school environment on the language performance of deprived children.

1.2.1 In order to study the effect of deprivation, three types of schools were selected. The children of these schools fall into the following three categories:

a) non-deprived,

b) deprived,

c) most-deprived.

Non-deprived group was represented by a private school, Prathamik Vidya Mandir, which is on a main thoroughfare in the town, surrounded by middle class society.
The deprived group was represented by the PMC school not very far from the Prathmik School, but a majority of these children are from slums, which also are to be found in and around this "good" middle class locality.

The most deprived group was selected from a village school, away from taluka place and cut off from the city atmosphere.

All the children were selected from Standard I of the above schools.

1.2.2 A deprivation scale was prepared to find out the economic, socio-cultural, and experiential deprivation level of the child. The scores were calculated on three aspects of deprivation.

1. Economic,
2. Socio-cultural,
3. Experiential.

These were based on 10 factors of economic, socio-cultural and experiential nature which were identified as relevant for the study of deprivation.

1. Occupation of the father,
2. Income of the family,
3. Standard of living of the family,
4. Caste of the family,
5. Educational background of the family,
6. Socio-cultural background of the family,
7. Personal interaction with the family and child rearing experiences,
8. Language stimulation by the family,
9. Stimulation through printed and play materials,
10. Stimulation for variety in daily routine.

The separate scores for these factors were calculated with the help of a scoring scheme.

1.2.3 Ten language tests were prepared to measure the language ability. The tests aimed to measure three aspects of the language ability of the child - vocabulary, comprehension, and narration and expression. These tests were administered to each of the three types of children as described earlier. As the children were from standard I and most had just entered school for the very first time in their lives, all tests were administered orally.

A second set of parallel language tests was prepared to find out the effect of school environment on their language performance. These tests were administered to the same children in the
next year, when they came to the second standard. Those who had failed or dropped out of standard I were not included.

1.2.4 Results to be found out:

1. Co-relation of total deprivation score and total language scores.

2. Co-relation of each factor of deprivation with all the components of language ability.

3. Out of all the factors of deprivation, the most important factor that affects the language ability of the child to be ascertained.

4. Whether the main difference in the language test scores between Corporation school and private school on the one hand and Corporation school and village school on the other is significant.

5. Whether the school environment had any effect on their language performance.
1.3.0 **Statement of the Problem**:

To study analytically the effect of deprivation on language ability of children studying in Municipal Corporation Schools in Pune who have recently entered primary school, in standard I, to compare them with private school children and village school children of similar level and to study in detail those aspects of deprivation which affect their language ability. And, further, to study whether exposure to school environment has an effect on their performance.

1.4.0 **Objectives of the Study**:

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the effect of economic, socio-cultural and experiential deprivation on the three components of language ability.

   a) vocabulary,
   b) comprehension,
   c) narration and expression.

2. To study the relation of different factors of deprivation with the three components of language ability as described above.
3. To find out the effective factor among the factors of deprivation which affect the language ability of the child.

4. To find out the effect of school environment on the language ability test scores for each school separately and to find out whether this effect is significant.

5. To find out whether the school environment has narrowed the difference between the language ability scores of deprived and non-deprived children.

1.5.0 Hypothesis:

The following hypothesis were framed in the study.

1. Development of language ability is related to level of deprivation of the child. Those who are highly deprived would tend to be poorer in development of language ability.

2. Among the three types of deprivation namely, economic, socio-cultural and experiential deprivation, experiential deprivation is likely to be the most prominent factor which has a detrimental effect on development of language ability.

3. Parental interaction and ways of bringing up the child is an important factor,
facilitating language development of the child.

4. Children from private schools are likely to do better than children from Corporation schools in language development, because the latter are more deprived economically, culturally and experientially.

5. Children from Corporation schools are likely to do better in language development as compared to children from village schools because the latter are experientially more deprived.

6. The school environment is likely to be more of a facilitating factor in development of language ability for deprived children than for non-deprived children.

1.6.0 Definition of terms involved in the problem:

1.6.1 The concept of 'deprivation':

In recent years there has been growing awareness that in this scientific and technological age, a nation's reservoir of intelligence is among its most important raw materials. It has become essential to search for a pool of unrealised ability. Therefore, concern has been centred upon an understanding of those
children who are poor, malnourished, socially and culturally backward; because these children meet early learning deficits and later school failure. Poverty produces educational failure and since lack of education reduces opportunities for employment it in turn contributes to the perpetuation of poverty. How does poverty cause educational failure? The answer is that poor children have learning deficits because their early lives had not offered them certain experiences fundamental to success in learning. A series of studies in this area are reported under the broad term 'Deprivation' by Panda. 11

Etymologically the word "deprivation" is derived from the verb "to deprive" which means "to disposes or strip" (a person or an object), and it implies a "felt loss". The reference obviously is to certain deficiencies in the environment, which are not only there but are also experienced as such by the individual. It relates to certain features or aspects of the environment that are absent or inadequate in certain degree which causes an impact on the functioning of the individual. Thus when one talks of deprivation, the emphasis is on the relevant aspects of environment, which are deficient or wanting in some respects.
"Therefore, any conceptualization of deprivation should have due emphasis on the environment or the setting in which the individual operates." 12

The term deprivation has been used by different researchers in different ways. According to Hunt, cultural deprivation is "failure to provide an opportunity to have the experiences required for adequate development of the semi-autonomous, central processes, demanded for acquiring skill in cognitive processes". 13 According to Wight, Gloniger and Kneene (1970) deprivation refers to deficiencies "both in experience and in the conditions of learning". 14

The definition given by Sir Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for Social Services, in Great Britain is, "Deprivation is seen as those circumstances which prevent people developing to nearer their potential, as indicated in poverty, in emotional improvement, in personality disorder, in poor educational attainment, in depression and despair". 15

He locates the cause of these troubles in four groups of factors.
1. Those like unemployment and low income which are essentially economic.
2. Those like bad housing and overcrowding which are environmental.
3. Those like illness, accidents and genetic endowment which are personal.
4. The final group contains child rearing practices. When a child is deprived of consistent love and guidance, he is deprived of that background most likely to lead to stability and maturity.

The word 'deprivation' is not necessarily confined to low socio-economic homes. Deprivation may also set in and influence low achievement due to inadequate schooling facilities and in a more affluent home because of parental indifference towards child-rearing. That is why it is said that the "deprivation" is conceptualised as a global construct referring to varied multidimensional experiences of an individual in the sense that it includes economic, social as well as environmental deprivation.

"The meaning of 'disadvantaged' or 'deprived' must be broadened to include all those who are blocked in any way from fulfilling their human potential. This
blocking can take place anywhere, in slums or in an affluent suburb, where children also may be neglected, over-protected, ruled by iron-handed parents or guided by no rules at all.¹⁷

Psychologists in India and elsewhere have attempted to combine the approaches of both the economists and socio-logists. They have combined income, education and house conditions to decide the poverty level of the person or group. The psychologists in general use the term low socio-economic status to refer to poverty and prefer quantitative method to classify people into different socio-economic status.

It is now admitted that behaviour is to be viewed not simply in terms of individual factors, nor the environmental factors as having isolated impact on the individual, but in the entire individual environmental complex as a constant two-way interplay. As Sinha says, "Ecology, conceived as a study of biological forms in relations to their physical environment, provides a useful framework for conceptualising most of the psychological processes. In its wider connotation ecology is not confined to merely physical environment, but comprises the
socio-cultural setting in which the individual operates. Thus the ecology provides a useful framework for understanding psychological processes related to deprivation. It not only makes our research efforts more realistic but also helps in suggesting some intervention strategies. 18

1.6.2 Characteristics of a deprived child:

"The term 'deprivation' (Clarke and Clarke 1953), "psychologically deprived" (Kirk 1958), "culturally deprived" (Reissman 1962), "socially disadvantaged" (Uzgirls 1968) are all used in current literature to identify the group whose children in the main are marked by three general characteristics during their school career."

1. Progressive decline in intellectual functioning.
2. Accumulative academic achievement deficit.
3. Premature school termination or higher drop out rate.

All these seem to be the effects of a deprived socio-cultural environment." 19
Martin and Castanada (1970) have also listed
the following characteristics of a deprived child.

1. Economically poor.
2. Experientially impoverished.
3. Life in an environment that is not
   education-oriented.
4. Lack of tradition of literacy.
5. Feel rejected by the major cultural groups.
7. Have difficulties with the English language.

Monroe described them thus, "Deprived children
cannot be defined by race, residence, jobs or behaviour
alone. They can be found anywhere, they are black,
white, they are without powers, hungry, or overfed, the
only thing they have in common is that all are left
out of a process which purports to carry all humankind,
regardless of background towards the same basic goals,
physical comfort, and survival and feeling of potency,
self-worth, connection with others and concern for the
common good. Any one deprived of the means to reach any
of these human goals is deprived, for it is the purpose
of our democratic social institution to advance the
development of these human goals for all people."
Prof. Rath has opened his lecture series on psycho-social problem of socially disadvantaged in this way. "The deprived child is one who is reared in a preschool environment which fails to develop the entering behaviour, necessary for beginning his formal education in the public schools. Their home environment lacks necessary qualitative stimulations for the adequate development and functioning of cognitive abilities." 22

He has quoted Miller, who has identified four major classes of variables where culturally disadvantaged children show deficits in performance as compared to the advantaged group.

(1) Cognitive variables, which refer to individual's abilities necessary to function at a level of abstraction. They include perceptual, conceptual and linguistic abilities.

(2) Motivational variables, which refer to those learned attitudes which maintain the task orientation of the individual and retain task-relevant involvement necessary for achievement.
(3) Personal style variables which refer to the personal way in which individuals process information, approach behaviours, and take the problem-solving situation.

(4) Physical variables which refer to sensorimotor co-ordination, nutritional facilities and many other things which are necessary for persistence in performance output.

1.6.3 Components of Deprivation:

Shrivastava noted two faces of deprivation - economic and cultural. He says economic deprivation is most important in a country like India where 22 million people are unemployed, where more than half of the population live below the poverty line, and where, in spite of 22.5 million tons of food reserve many go hungry for want of adequate purchasing power. 23

Therefore it is quite often suggested that removal of economic deprivation will automatically remove linguistic and other forms of deprivation. But Allen argued that economic poverty is too gross to reflect many psychological differences existing within this category. 24 Removal of economic poverty alone
may not remove the linguistic or cultural deprivation. Some of the working class and the prosperous rural homes do have financial resources. The majority of such children are both properly fed and clothed, they get from their parents emotional support as well. The problem therefore is not one of lack of good care of feeding but lack of stimulating environment to give them sound intellectual start in life. 25

Kellmer Pringle has given three conditions of deprivation:

1. the child who is living in residential care either for long periods or is permanently deprived of normal family life.

2. if a child is unloved and rejected by his parents, especially his mother, he is likely to suffer emotional deprivation.

3. the child who is growing up in a home which is culturally and educationally extremely unstimulating will be handicapped by environmental deprivation. 26

It is generally accepted that each of these three conditions may be detrimental to emotional and social development, but in India the growing concern
is not to consider the emotionally, physically or mentally handicapped from middle and upper class background but to concentrate on those segments of society which are estranged due to ethnic and socio-economic circumstances.

Factors like lack of family conversational experience, lesser use of language as a mode for socialization and controlling of the child, and the qualitative difference in the style and concept of communication even though emotional climate equals middle class homes, make language one of the most important contributing factors to working class children not getting a good intellectual start in life. The deprivation index therefore should include linguistic, cultural, and economic aspects.

Mishra and Tripathi divided their deprivation scale into two factors and 15 areas (Details in Chapter 3).

1. Physico-economic,
2. Experiential.

Referring to different studies, it has been noted that following factors are important to decide the level of deprivation of a child, (Lawton 1968).
1. Physical conditions of the home,
2. Income of the parents,
3. Age of the parents leaving school,
4. Parents' attitude to education,
5. Size of the family.

1.6.4 Components of deprivation defined in the study.

Thus in deprivation, reference obviously is to certain deficiencies, in the environment, which are not only there but are also experienced as such by the individual. It relates to certain features or aspects of the environment that are absent or inadequate in certain degree which causes an impact on the functioning of the individual. Three aspects of deprivation has been identified in this study.

1. Economic,
2. Socio-cultural,
3. Experiential.

Economic Deprivation:

Really speaking deprivation is primarily an economic concept. In India the economic deprivation is the root cause of other two types of deprivation. For considering economic deprivation, occupation of the father, income of the family, quality of food, and
clothing, housing conditions, that is, standard of living were included.

Economic deprivation is the result of poorly paid occupation of the father. Low income which is inadequate to satisfy the needs of the family members leads to unhygienic living conditions, insufficient clothing and more-over malnutrition of the children in the family. Research studies show that the consequences of malnutrition for those under the age of 36 months are not only 

retardation/physical growth but also similar effect on learning abilities. \(^{30}\)

When a family does not get adequate nutrition even when all the members spend their resources of time, energy and money on bread winning activities, it knows poverty as a total experience. Almost every member contributes to the family income. There are economic pressures that force the children to join the labour force early and the children of the poor have no childhood. \(^{31}\)

**Socio-Cultural Deprivation**:

One of the frequently employed criteria of deprivation is membership of some specified group. Individuals are considered as deprived on the grounds of low social status, belonging to a minority community
or tribes or to a particular caste (Das, Jachuk & Panda 1970, Rath, Dash 1972, Sinha 1977). It cannot be denied that certain segments of the social structure in any country are correlated with deprivational life experiences. Certain caste affiliations limit social interaction. The social status of a particular individual determines his place of residence, the group of people surrounding his home, and visiting his home. In India, especially in Maharashtra, there are lots of religious functions in the home which stimulate the cultural atmosphere of the family. But certain families observe these rituals, certain do not.

The educated parents and the educated siblings create the cultural atmosphere in the home. They allow the children to play in the group of children whose parents are educated. The home atmosphere in their home is educated and informative. They have newspapers, magazines, story books etc. in their homes. They listen to radio, T.V., transistors which are the communication and information media.

But the children coming from low social strata are deprived of the above cultural atmosphere as the parents are ignorant about the importance of these cultural media and also they can't afford them, and they have no time to think about them.
The socio-culturally deprived children are thus surrounded by illiterate parents, illiterate siblings, and a of illiterate friends in which they are playing all the time. The result is that their social and cultural development is hampered and in school they lag behind their counterparts (Rath & Das 1972, Panda 1970).

**Experiential Deprivation**

Most of the deprivation studies have tended to take poverty conditions or socio-economic status as the independent variable without a consideration of the proximal factor in the environment. Some cases may be there who score high inspite of the economic, socio-cultural deprivation. For instance, in a recent study on the effect of nutritional status on cognitive functioning of infants, it was found that even when socio-economic status, nutritional intake and the related anthropometric measurements were all clearly below par, a child who performed well on the cognitive tasks tended to have a strong emotional bond with the mother because of the loving, stimulating experiences from her.  

So even when social and economical level is taken as the variable on which the sampling is done the actual insight into the nature of the problem of deprivation came only with the breaking up
of the environment into different experiences. The experiences which a child is getting in the home has very prominent effect on the child. The experiences from home to home are different because the individuals (parents and sibling) involved are different. Their background are different, their experiences are different. Economic and social-cultural deprivation form impressions on the child of 5 to 6 years of age no doubt, but the child of this age is passive in his reaction to these deprivations. Active reactions are formed when there is loss of stimulating experiences by the parents or other members of the family. The rearing experiences, the verbal experiences, the educational experiences, the play and recreational experiences given to the child by the parents are important factors deciding the level of deprivation. The most important aspect of the deprivation mentioned earlier is 'the emotional and verbal responsibility of the mother' and 'maternal involvement with the child.'

Thus the lack of variety of emotional stimulating experiences in the home is denoted here as 'experiential deprivation' which is the most detrimental factor for cognitive development of the
child. Generally where economic and socio-cultural deprivation is found, the experiential deprivation is also there.

1.6.5 The concept of language ability:

Baron Friedrich Von Humboldt, once said 'Thanks to language, Man became a man'. This implies that one of the most important characteristics that differentiate man from animals is his possession of language. It is a species-specific quality, which makes us human and what we are.

Louis Gray defined language in three ways:

1. In the broadest and most general sense, language may be said to be any means of expressing emotional or mental concepts by any living being whatsoever and of communicating them to or receiving them from other living beings.

2. In its specific and usual sense language is such expression and communication to or from human beings by means of speech and hearing, the sounds uttered or heard being so combined in systems evolved, conventionalised and recognized by common
usage at any given period, in the history of human race within a given community or within given communities, that they are mutually intelligible to all approximately normal members thereof.

3. In a special and derived sense, the term may be applied to means of expression and communication between human beings, as by gestures to signals carved or written symbols and the like, or even to sentiments supposed to be conveyed to or between human beings by means of inanimate objects.

Gray says, "language is used in linguistics as in popular parlance only in the specific and usual sense of the second part of the definition i.e. as an expression and communication to and from human beings by means of speech and hearing. The cardinal element of this sentence is that the sounds of language are combined in systems evolved, conventionalised and recognized by common usage."

Any language has to perform certain basic functions. These functions of language are:

1. Communication of Information: Rao (1974) says "The oldest school of thought considers communication as the primary functions of language
and defines language as a purely human and non-
instinctive method of communication, based on
arbitrary system of symbolisms.

Language is used as main vehicle of
disseminating information from person to person,
from community to community and from country to country.
Without some form of written or spoken (artificial
or natural) language communication is impossible.

2. Expressive Function: Language is defined
as the medium for the expression of images and ideas
or the 'expression of thoughts by means of speech
sounds'. The expression of feelings, emotions,
attitudes is the most important function of language.
As such it serves as a purgative to emotions which
govern most of our life's activities. (Mijoo 1980).

3. Directive Function: This is another basic
function of language. This function is served when
language is used for the purpose of causing or
preventing over action.

4. Other functions of language which have
been considered important are its referential,
representative, evocative and emotive functions.
Devey insisted upon the referential function of language. He says that the instrumental nature of speech gives us a clue to the important function of language. It is through the use of speech that the infant satisfies its needs. It is through the use of speech, again that man produces the greatest variety of effects on all sorts of objects, through the agency of other human beings.

1.6.6 Language ability of the child

From the moment of his birth, the human infant hears speech all around him. We can say with very little qualification that the language a child attends to and learns from is the speech of significant persons in his world, addressed to each other and to him, in spontaneous but highly patterned social interaction. Interaction is verbal and non-verbal. Cazden (1972) pointed out that "As the child attends to his social interaction and gradually participates in it, he learns what Hymes (1971) calls, "Communicative competence". Competence here does not have the colloquial meaning of "adequacy", it is a technical term, first used by Noam Chomsky, for the nonconscious, tacit knowledge that underlies behaviour. Communicative adequacy is, what teachers work towards, communicative competence is what every child has " (Cazden 1972).
Language ability of a child means ability (power) of using the language in particular situations. It also includes both knowledge of language (in the more usual and narrow sense of syntax, phonology and semantics) and knowledge of the social world and of rules for using language in that world so that speech is appropriate as well as grammatical and creative within both linguistic and socio-linguistic rules. Together, these aspects of language ability are realised in the child's actual speech behaviour, or performance. This performance includes both speaking and comprehending. (Cazén 1972).39

Language consists of all the words in a person's mental dictionary and all the rules at his (usually non-conscious) command for combining those words, into an infinite number of novel sentences and for interpreting the equally novel sentences that he hears. "Ability" refers to the power of gathering of words in a person's mental dictionary and knowing the rules at his command for combining these words into different novel sentences and for interpreting the equally novel sentences that he hears.
1.6.7  **Language in education:**

The formal educational system of any society is mainly concerned with imparting knowledge of the culture of the society in both material and non-material aspects. To serve this function of imparting knowledge and skills the system needs an elaborate system of language. Not only this, the levels of sophistication of language to be used with individuals of different age groups, cultural backgrounds, sexes and levels of education also play a role in educating them. Without the establishment of proper communication levels and channels between the educators and educands, the process of education seems to be sterile and ineffective, or rather the whole effort of educational practice is futile without proper communication.

Not only is transmission of information dependent upon language but the development of concepts especially abstract ones is difficult if not impossible without the use of some kind of language.

(a) **Language and cognitive development:**

Language and cognitive growth are closely related, though the nature of their relationship has been a matter of controversy. One point of view
considers that language has a determining influence on cognitive development. As Vygostsky (1962) puts it, "the child's intellectual growth is contingent on his mastering the social means of thought, that is, language." The process of intellectual development starts, according to Vygostsky, with the early intervention between a child and his parents in the form of gestures and articulation. Parents become significant adults in a child's environment as they demarcate the relevant dimensions of experience, which the child attends to and learns to process the information with words acting as 'signifiers' for the 'signified', that is the 'objects'.

In course of experience the child learns to associate arbitrary signifiers with signified. As a result, language becomes both interpersonal and intrapersonal (social), which together shape the child's cognitive growth. Sapir (1929) and his student Whorf (1956) have very emphatically reversed the traditional view of thought being independent of, and prior to language. Whorf (1956) puts it thus - "the word is presented in kaleidoscopic flux of impression which has to be organised by our minds." Brown and Lameberg (1954) consider language to be the mould into which the mind of a child is poured.
They assign language the role of ordering and structuring child's experiences. It may be mentioned here that concept learning is also an attempt to bring order and structure into multiplicity of experiences to which a human child is exposed (Shrivastav 1977). Language therefore plays a fundamental role in concept learning. Language learning includes within itself three forms of human learning — concept formation, development of attitudes towards ourselves and others, and development of psycho-motor skills. To conclude, a good language environment raises the possibility of expansion and sophisticated organization of concepts forming the nucleus of a child's cognitive structure in education.

(b) Language and intelligence:

Piaget (1970) takes the development of intellectual operation or cognitive functions to be independent of language. Language according to Piaget (1970) is not "the motor of operational evolution, but rather an instrument in the service of intelligence itself". The difference between the viewpoints of Vygotsky and Piaget is one of the degree and emphasis as neither of them have denied the importance of
language in cognitive development. While Vygotsky assigns language the determining role, Piaget ascribes to it only the roles of transformation and restructuring thought process. Moreover both the viewpoints emphasize the importance of early childhood experiences capable of bringing about differences in cognitive growth of two children. It also cannot be denied that the development of language forms an integral part of this early experience, and depends upon the quality of language environment to which a child is exposed. The child's developing cognitive structure will get accordingly transformed, restructured and refined. It is a matter of simple inference that a difference in these early experiences will also bring about a difference in the child's capacity to cope with the environment. "A child is born into a family with a particular social background. He has the kinds of experiences which allow him to develop certain cognitive and verbal skills and these in turn contribute to the subsequent learning expected of him in school." \(^{45}\)

The effect of early experiences and language environment of a child on his cognitive and verbal skills have been subjected to a very thorough investigation both in India and abroad. The general
conclusion has been that the effect of early deprivation on these skills is an adverse one (Sinha 1975). Mishra and Tripathi (1978). Muralidharan (1977) found the effects of preschool education to be beneficial for language development and school readiness of underprivileged children.

In education it is well-known that a poor language experience increases both physical and intellectual dropout rates. Language is both a subject in the school curriculum and a medium of instruction and therefore its role in making the school meaningless for a child and physically removing him from the scene cannot be denied. Its effect can easily be felt in the growing incidence of academic underachievement, which is achievement below the level of aptitude-based expectations. Shrivastav studied the factors related to educational underachievement and found poor language proficiency and poor reading and study skills to be some of the important factors related to it.

Ashok Kelkar in his paper 'Language and Education' pointed out, "Language and education can be considered together in four possible contexts -
1. Language is a medium of education in and out of the classroom.

2. Education has to provide for the teaching of the learner’s own language.

3. Education also provides for the teaching of other languages.

4. Finally, education may also seek to provide not only for learning this or that language but also for learning about those languages and language in general as a social institution. "

He says, "One must constantly bear in mind that language is a medium not merely for imparting information but for organizing thought. For organizing one’s thought or following the contours of some one else’s thought more than a perfunctory knowledge of the language is required. "

Language is a chief means of education. It is an important tool of learning and is medium of instruction in all subjects. Language acquired by a child is his mother tongue and it occupies the highest place in his life. The mastery of mother tongue opens to him every field of knowledge. It is the language which is constantly spoken and heard around him. Clear thinking, clear expression, sincerity of
thought, feeling and action and fullness of emotional and creative life can be cultivated only through the mother tongue. That is why it has a vital position in the life of a man. Thus the study of mother tongue is considered as the most important subject in education. It enables the child to widen the horizon of his knowledge. It is thus the first essential of any course of education.

Naladkar has enumerated the aims of teaching language as follows: development of ability to listen to express, to read, and to write clearly and fluently. He says the main objectives of teaching mother tongue is

1) to develop in pupils the ability to use a progressively increasing vocabulary,
2) ability to comprehend,
3) ability to express.

Keeping in view the objectives of teaching mother tongue, it was decided to consider the following three aspects of language ability of the child in the present study:

1) vocabulary,
2) comprehension,
3) narration and expression.
These three aspects of the child's language ability are useful for him for the school adjustment and school achievement in language as well as in other school subjects also. It was therefore decided to see whether there is a difference in these aspects of language ability at the initial stage of education between deprived and non-deprived group of children.

1.6.8 The three types of schools:

a) The Village School:

A village school was the proper school where the most deprived group could be found. The children were not exposed and they were mostly economically backward also.

The village selected was in the interior of Bhor taluka of Pune district. It is situated on the banks of a small river, 'Yelwandi'. The village is typical of many Indian villages. The village is on one bank of the river, the school is on the other. The school building is like a barrack where classes from Std. 3 to Std. 7 were held in small rooms. The students of 1st and 2nd Std. were assembled in the court-yard of an old run-down temple in the village. The buildings are dusty. Students sit cross-legged on gunny bags or gunny mattresses. There is not a single audio-visual aid
for teaching. The teachers themselves do not reside in the village but commute from the city of Pune or from Bhor, the taluka headquarters. Naturally they are more interested in catching buses than in teaching. The bus is known to the students as it is the only passenger vehicle plying on the only road to the taluka place which is also the only outlet of the village to the outside world. There is hardly any traffic on the road except for the occasional bus or perhaps some cycles and a motor-cycle at times.

There is no shop in the village. The villagers are required to go to Bhor or to Pune for their requirements. The bazar-day of the taluka place is the day of purchases for these villagers also.

The parents were mostly landless labourers toiling in the fields of landlords. Some of them are artisans. They have no time or are least bothered about the development of their children. The children are left to their own devices. They roam about on the banks of the river and while away the time of the day. The school does not have any attraction for them.
In other words these children do not have many of the things which the city children enjoy such as gardens, parks, crowded streets, shops, market place, colourful people etc. Thus there is experiential deprivation of these children.

b) Corporation School:

Poona Municipal Corporation has opened 198 primary schools which advocate free education and it is compulsory for the child of school-going age to join the school adjacent to the locality. Children from low socio-economic classes take advantage of these schools. Majority of the children are from nearby slums, chawls, or wadis. The Corporation school building was well built but there was no proper arrangement for drinking water or for sanitation. The teachers were from middle-class background, coming from the city proper. They were educated and well-trained teachers. There were hardly any pictures or educational aids on the walls of the classes. The students have no benches, they had wooden strips to sit on. The teachers were sitting in the chair (much higher than the students). The teachers hardly used any audio-visual aid for fear that the children might break them.
The children from the Corporation school come from slums and chawls, but they have the benefit of an urban city atmosphere where socio-cultural interaction is plentiful. They developed in some kind of stimulating atmosphere of which village school children are deprived. For example, the Corporation school children could see hundreds of vehicles (motors, cars, trucks, cycles, scooters) every day because they play on the Bombay-Pune highway itself. Exactly opposite their slums is Shivajinagar Railway Station. So they came across variety of people. They know what a train is, what an engine is.

c) Private School:

A private school was selected to provide a sample of non-deprived children. The children in this school were from middle class, well-to-do families. Their economic status was good. In addition, the parents were well-educated, well employed, well-informed. They showed much interest in their children. They have provided all types of childhood experiences to their children.
This school has a big, stone, three-storied building. Each class has five divisions. In each class there were about 50 to 60 children. Each class was decorated with colourful charts, pictures and boards. It has a big playground. The teachers are from middle class families. Majority of them were Brahmins by caste. The children sat on benches in the classroom and they were well-dressed, with shoes or chappals on their feet.

1.6.9 Reasons for selecting children from standard-I:

First standard is the opening year for primary education. Due to the Government policy of providing free and compulsory primary education to all, the parents have to enrol their children in any nearby school.

Another point is that upto this time, a child has been at home. He is a product of that socio-cultural environment. His cognitive, intellectual, linguistic development takes place in these surroundings, in which he is reared up till now.

Thus, there is no effect of school environment, such as teachers', and pupils' talk or any communication around him. The home effect alone is working on his
development. This is the case as regards the majority of children in the sample. As the interest of the study was in language development and this required a crystal clear effect of his environment, in which a child was brought up and reared, whether it was deprived or non deprived, this study wanted to find out its effect on his language development.

1.7.0 Research Design and Methodology:

Sample:

The deprived group was represented by the local free primary school conducted by Poona Municipal Corporation, the Narveer Tanaji Vidya Mandir. The school was in the area of Wakadewadi, a poor section of Shivajinagar. The majority of the student population of this school came from "Mahatma Gandhi Zopadpatti", which was only 100 meteres away from the school. The parents of these children were rickshaw drivers, bus drivers, hawkers, casual labourers on some construction site or doing hamali work, or class-IV workers in factories, garages or in Government offices. They came from low socio-economic status. This slum area is exactly opposite the Shivajinagar Railway Station, and is situated on Bombay-Poona National Highway No. 4.
The Narveer Tanaji Vidya Mandir, which was the focus of the study, was a boy's school. So it was decided that only boys and not the girl students of other sample schools should be involved for study.

A majority of the children were Marathi-speaking and the medium of instruction was also Marathi. The few non-Marathi speakers were omitted, and only Marathi speakers were included in the sample.

As explained in the Introduction, the children who have just entered into primary school, i.e. first standard students were taken as a sample for study.

The aim was a depth study, as each child was tested, for his language ability and for his home background to ascertain the deprivation level. The same group of children were tested for the second year on language tests to see whether the school environment has cancelled out the effect of deprivation. The sample was limited to one division of the 1st standard in each school.

In the Corporation school there were 72 children in Division A of 1st standard on the roll call. But only 60 children could be taken because others were non-Marathi speakers. And because of the
irregularity in attendance and drop outs, the final size of the sample was 42.

The second group was drawn from a Private school, the Prathmik Vidya Mandir, which is only 1 kilometer away from the Corporation school. It was situated on Jangli Maharaj Road, one of the main roads joining the national highway to Poona city. The students were from middle-class background. They were the children of Government officers, businessman, engineers, bank clerks and officers, executives in private factories, heads of institutions, teachers etc. They were from educated background.

This school was a mixed school. There were 42 boys and 22 girls in the 1st standard. All the boys were taken for study except two who were non-Marathi speakers. Two children went because of the transfer of their parents. Thus the final figure in the sample was 37.

The third group of students were taken from village 'Khanapur' - Zilla Parishad's school in taluka Bhor, about 50 kms. from Pune city. It is about ten kms. from taluka place - Bhor. Thus the name of the school is "Jeevan Shikshan Mandir". It is typical rural school as mentioned earlier.
This is also a mixed school. There are 21 students on the roll call, 11 boys and 10 girls. Out of these only the 11 boys were taken for study.

The statistics of the entrance age of each student in different schools are as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>No. of children</th>
<th>Age range in years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Corporation school</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5 - 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5 - 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Village school</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tools:

Two tools were prepared to study the effect of deprivation on language ability -

1. Deprivation scale;
2. Language ability tests.

1. Deprivation scale was prepared to measure the level of deprivation of the students. It was measured in three aspects -
1. Economic;
2. Socio-cultural;
3. Experiential.

2. Language tests were prepared to measure the language ability of children at that particular time. These tests were divided into three components-

1. Vocabulary,
2. Comprehension,
3. Narration and expression.
Chapter I: References


2. Hunter - op. cit.

3. ibid.


6. Thombre, (see note 5 above).


18. Durganond Sinha, op. cit.


22. Rath, op. cit.


31. S. Anandalaxmy - "There's a method to the measurement", in Sinha, Tripathi and Misra, op. cit.
32. ibid.


37. Quoted in T.S. Rao, op. cit.


39. ibid.


42. ibid.
43. ibid.