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# Insight into the Language of Psychology: a Glance at the Two Year B.Ed. Programme

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## **Abstract**

*There is no doubt about the fact that language is a medium of communication. It is the source of transmission of ideas and intended meanings from one entity or group to the other with their mutually understood semiotic and semantic rules. The nature and usage of it may vary depending upon the need and circumstances. The present paper takes a look at the language of the course of 'Childhood and Growing Up' as part of the two year B.Ed. programme as proposed by NCTE 2014. The course proposes to offer the understanding of psychology of the child and adolescent with respect to their development in a socio cultural context. In this paper, the method employed for the analysis is the theoretical content analysis of the course of 'Childhood and Growing up'. Being one of the foundation papers, it seemed important to understand the presentation and requirement of the course along with its purpose. Along with the significance of the document, the paper also aims to understand its presentation in a multilingual context. The coherence of the text is analysed at both local and global levels in order to gauge the covert potential meanings and linkages between the topics. The choice of words have also been*

*paid attention to; the preference of a particular word over the other and the probable reasons for the choice. The author also made an attempt to look for the literary devices present in the course description such as metaphors, similes, analogies and the like. The paper concludes by presenting certain points to ponder over with respect to the use of language to describe the course contents. It tries to answer certain questions related to the significance of the usage of language and choice of words in the course details and at the same time tries to understand whether these have an impact on the understanding and grasping of the ideas by the target audiences and what role do they play to nurture the multilingual Indian context.*

**Keywords:** *language, psychology, two year B.Ed. programme*

## **Introduction**

The discipline of educational psychology has always been an inevitable part of the teacher education curriculum. It forms a core part of the foundation courses in the programme. Its

focus on the developmental stages of the child, moral, emotional, physical as well as cognitive development of an individual makes it an essential aspect to be studied. Educational psychology helps the teacher to study the ability, interests, intelligence, needs and adopt different techniques of teaching for effective communication. The importance and usage of the discipline has been stated and emphasized in both theory as well as practical aspects of the teaching learning procedures.

NCFTE 2009 proposes “the introduction to the study of childhood, child development and adolescence and hence the shift in the course nomenclature, structure as well as the focus and objectives.” It can be noted that it is not just the nomenclature that is changed, but at the same time, the overall idea and conceptualization of the course has been updated and upgraded. It’s not just the duration of the programme that has been extended with an extra year but at the same time a qualitative modification of the course on psychology has been made. The focus now is also been given to the importance of understanding of the development of learners in their socio cultural context, hence establishing linkages with other disciplines. At the same time, acknowledging the diversity that exists in our country and its representation in our classrooms. Thus being sensitive and aware about the meaning and

implementation of inclusion in the real life scenarios.

In terms of content, the course has been upgraded, however it is important to understand the presentation of the contents of psychology in terms of language of the course. Chomsky (1965) emphasizes importance of language stating “...thus an essential property of language is that it provides the means for expressing indefinitely many thoughts and for reacting appropriately in an indefinite range of new situations.”(pg. 6).

“Literacy Studies provides a way of understanding that writing is more than spoken language written down and that the term literacy embraces more than the acts of reading and writing. This approach enables the discussion to move beyond both the traditional formulations of both sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics.”(pg. 98).

Thus it could be deduced that in order to gauge complete understanding of the psychology content in the curriculum, it is imperative to study the language used. It presents the intended points of view of the curriculum framers. Focussing on merely the content while analysing the framework would somewhere be unfair to the efforts and thoughts that go behind framing it. The study of language structures reveals the rationale behind usage of a particular word, for instance,

or the amount of description given for a particular idea and the like.

Further, the courses on psychology in the domain of education are generally believed to be flooded with various theories discussing psychological aspects about learners and eventually improving teaching learning process. However, as noted above, the present curriculum framework reinforces the socio cultural aspect of the development and going beyond the theoretical framework. In this regard, I believe, it becomes all the more necessary to analyse and understand the usage of language in order to be ascertained of grasping the intended meaning as a reader.

### **Objective**

1. To explore the language of content related to psychology in two year B.Ed. curriculum framework.

### **Methodology**

#### **Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis was the course on psychology as recommended by NCTE (2014) for the two year B.Ed. programme. This was the paper entitled: 'Childhood and Growing Up'.

#### **Method**

I employed 'interpretative content analysis' (Ahuvia, 2000). This method of analysing the content goes beyond merely receiving the

content and quantifying the codes. This involves interpreting the data at a latent level.

### **Procedure**

Interpretative content analysis demands going beyond the surface level text and grasping the overt meanings. In the present paper, I analysed the curriculum under five themes.

These are:

- Presentation of language.
- Coherence of the text.
- Choice of words made.
- Literary devices used.
- Nature of the text

### **Results and discussion**

In this section, I attempt to study the language of the course on psychology in two year B.Ed. programme under various themes.

1. Presentation of language

The voice of description of course is active with the course being the subject. Direct description of the contents is presented. The initial paragraph describes the overall contents summarising it as, "This course offers an introduction to the study of childhood, child development and adolescence (Sharma, 2003). It aims to develop understanding about children of different age groups, through close observation and interaction with children from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (Saraswathi, 1999). The main focus in the course would be to

enable student teachers to arrive at an understanding of how different socio-political realities construct different childhoods, within children's lived contexts: family, schools, neighbourhoods and community." (NCTE 2014, pg. 7-8)

Further, the description explains it from the viewpoint of the learner and expectations attached from them. "The students would read about theories of child development, childhoods and adolescence as constructed in different social-economic and cultural settings." (pg. 8). This implies that the students of the course are anticipated to be active participants in the process of their learning. This clearly defines their roles.

In the later paragraph, the description takes on interrogative and contemplative form with certain directive questions. "Do children across different cultures experience adolescence similarly? How does urbanisation and economic change impact its construction and experience?" (pg. 8). This delineates the responsibility onto the teacher educators of the course in order to make the syllabus and pedagogy responsive to these aspects. This being a framework of the programme, it gives ample scope of improvisation and development of the contents and pedagogy to respective teachers of the course.

Although the course directly do not specify multilingualism in the contents, however various aspects points towards it. It lays emphasis on studying children from different backgrounds and in different socio cultural contexts. Further, it reinforces the need to understand the learners' lives and realities through their experiences in their words. This certainly will emphasise multilingualism in a classroom scenario. Students coming from different linguistic backgrounds would enrich the teaching learning process.

"Opportunities would be provided to engage with children's lived realities in many ways: through biographies, stories, narrations of growing up in different cultures, observations about children by parents and teachers, children's diaries, testimonies and the media." (NCTE, 2014, pg. 8). These are the recommendations for student teachers during their B.Ed. programme, however the same can be replicated and implemented in the regular school scenarios.

## 2. Coherence of the course

Coherence of the text refer to the overall unity and agreement of the text. A text is coherent if the overall meaning and message is clear and same. It should bring the focus of the reader on specific ideas, topics and themes in the text rather than splitting the themes in the text.

A coherent piece of text enables the reader to maintain the focus and attention on the important aspects of the text and hence help to be alert with the flow of the text.

Global coherence in a text is achieved when the entire written piece is focussed towards one unifying theme and does not get deviated. On the other hand, local coherence is studied within the entire text. It focuses on specific sentence and paragraphs to judge their coherence. Local coherence is achieved using various connecting devices such as conjunctions.

In the course ‘child, childhood and cognition’, I found it to be globally coherent. The entire paper explains the requirement of the contents, describing the nature and structure and at the same time stating the expectations attached from the teachers as well as students. The entire description of the course contents enables the reader i.e. the teachers and syllabus framers to revolve around the concept of psychological content in the framework.

As far as local coherence is concerned, I found the paper to be locally coherent as well. Each paragraph of the text points towards a particular theme and the choice of words used and the conjunctions employed provides the linkages that provide a complete understanding of the text.

A paragraph, for instance, describing the course to be interdisciplinary in nature initially puts forth the purpose and later goes on to explain and elaborate the meaning. In doing so, it makes use of connecting words such as ‘and’ as well as the pronouns like ‘which’ to avoid repetition of the words and yet keeping the coherence and meaning intact. “The course builds an interdisciplinary framework to interpret and analyse observations and interactions. The theoretical frames would be drawn from cross-cultural psychology, sociology and anthropology to bring together theories of child development and crucial aspects from the construct of childhood, which has political, social and cultural dimensions.” (NCTE, 2014, pg. 8).

### 3. Choice of words

In order to analyse any text, an important parameter is to understand the words that have been made use of. Similarly, while studying the course structure of psychology, I attempted to understand the choice of words that have been made while describing an idea.

The language of the course used is quite simple with direct meanings of the sentences. While pointing towards the essence of the paper, it describes, “The main focus in the

Course...” (pg. 7), hence making the readers attentive towards it.

Further, while narrating the importance of understanding of diversity by the learners, the course states, “The students would ‘read’ about theories...The course would ‘importantly include’ perspective building on the issues of marginalization, of difference and diversity, and stereotyping.” (pg. 8). Here the use of the word ‘read’ represents that the student teachers should only need to be aware of the different theories that exist however they should have an elaborate idea and understanding of the issues of marginalization and diversity (importantly include); thus emphasizing the latter with the use of appropriate phrases.

While explaining the relevance of linkages of the classroom realities with the outside world, symbolism has been made use of. “...provide windows into looking at ideas...” (pg. 8). The relationship of the two worlds have been beautifully described using the word ‘windows’. This also reinforces the fact that it is in the control of the teacher whether s/he wants these windows to be open and let the fresh air and light of real life contexts of the children enter the dingy world full of theoretical constructs.

#### 4. Literary devices used

Being a directive text focussing upon the recommendations and directions for the teachers and students, the framework does not

portray any use of literary devices such as metaphors or idioms or simile etc. lack of any such figures of speech do not really hamper the purpose of the discourse. The objective of the framework is to put forth the nature, structure and pedagogy of the discipline along with the necessary contents that should be included as a part of the curriculum as per the recommendations. This has been accomplished quite successfully. However, it would be interesting to note that if such devices are made use of while outlining the course contents, how would the framework look like and how would it be perceived by the stakeholders.

#### 5. Nature of the text

The text in concern that is the curriculum framework for discipline of psychology is directive in nature. Directive texts are concerned with concrete activity that is directed towards the future. Similarly, the course structure of psychology gives recommendations, instructions and line of action for the future course of action that is the implementation of the programme. Some of the excerpts suggesting this are:

“Opportunities would be provided to engage with children’s lived realities in many ways: through biographies, stories, narrations of growing up in different cultures, observations about children by parents and teachers,

children's diaries, testimonies and the media." By the same token, "The two important field based components would be to observe children in their natural settings, especially at play (or in a community setting), and to interact with children using activities as a base to establish rapport." (NCTE, 2014, pg. 8)

### **Conclusion**

The question arises that is it really important to study the language usage and structure of the course on psychology? Does it really have an impact on the teaching learning process of the course depending on the kind of language that is made use of? The answer to these questions, I believe, is yes. Language is the medium of communication. It is used to let the ideas travel from one domain to another. Thus kind of language used, the choice of words and phrases implemented, all influences the imprint it is going to have on the reader. Similarly in the present case, the sentence formed, the syllables used, the choice of words to give a lasting impact or to emphasize a certain aspect over the other gives the teacher educators and/or the student teachers to understand what it is that deserves more involvement and why. This would then be transacted into the pedagogy as well as framing of the syllabi of respective universities.

The importance of language in the presentation of a course description holds great significance. The choice of words, the sentence structure, the repetition of words, everything has relevance. The paper on 'childhood and growing up' has been comprehensively combined and knit together while not only describing the essential components but at the same time emphasising the ones which require more attention on the parts of the learner as well as the teacher.

Although the framework does not talk about multilingualism, however, it greatly emphasizes the need and requirement of acknowledging diversity in our society in various forms. At a subtle level, the range of diversities also encompass the variety of languages that exist in the Indian subcontinent. This would however will be the creative endeavour of the teacher of how s/he manages to bring this aspect into the classroom as a resource.

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