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# UNIT 1 WHAT IS LANGUAGE?

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, we will explain what language is? What is the definition and scope of language? What is the role of grammar in language? How do we acquire sound system, word formation, sentence formation and information sharing in a language? We will discuss psychological and social aspects of language. We will discuss in very short, what is the importance of language proficiency and how various language evaluation and assessment techniques work. We will also discuss about language and its relation to literature.

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## 1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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This unit is largely about nature and structure of language. After you have read this unit, you should be able to respond to the following issues:



- language as a concept
- relationship of language and society
- innate language faculty of human beings
- the nature and structure of language
- how language is used
- language learning assessment tools
- concept of language proficiency
- difference between informal and formal communication

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## 1.2 IMPORTANCE AND SCOPE OF LANGUAGE

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There are two ways of looking at language. Ordinary people recognise language only as a means of communication. Linguists generally look at language as a pairing of a grammar and a dictionary. These two ways of looking at language restrict the versatility of language and its usage. These perspectives conclude that speakers of a given language come later than dictionaries and grammars that exist in a given language. However, unlike ordinary people or linguists for that matter, it is important that you know there is no language without speakers. Dictionaries and grammars cannot be made unless there are speakers of a language who would participate with linguists or people to prepare dictionaries and grammars. Speech community is the only vital part of language and its usage. Speech community is formed by people who speak a given language and give the given language a shape or standard. There is no doubt that language developed as humans developed in a certain process through various phases. Had there been no society or speech community, the dictionaries and grammars would have had no value. Therefore, to be able to define language, we will have to understand various aspects of language including evolution of language.

First of all, language is associated with the identity of an individual. When a person says that he speaks Gondi, he not only says which language he speaks, he also tells a lot about the society he belongs to and the social customs and norms of that society. He indicates what class of people he lives with and is exposed to and where would he return after it gets dark. Secondly, speaker of a language takes into account all these factors that are a fact of his life. Who is to be respected, who is to be loved, who is too hated and who is small etc get their due identity from the language heard to be spoken by them. Language really has got a special relationship with society. Language is a medium that maintains and moderates class hierarchy too.

The psychological aspect of language is also a very important aspect of language. It is surprising to note that children from all over the world, no matter whichever social class or geographical location they belong to, develop an adult like

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command over the language they speak. By the time she is four year old, the child develops a language of her own that matches the correctness principles of the appropriate words and grammar of a given language. We don't find it difficult to tell new stories to a four year old everyday and hear the same from her.

There is another important of aspect of language. Language is a medium that nullifies distance. A friend who lives thousands of miles away from you can get upset with over phone and that anger can get pacified if you call up again and pacify his anger. How does it happen? Only by the use of appropriate language.

It is also very common that children learn the languages spoken by their neighbours, friends, family and the environment. The capacity to learn a language is not restricted to the fact that we can learn only one language. Everyone has the capacity to acquire various aspects of language use at various levels and learn multiple languages. In fact, multilingualism is constitutive of being human.

Structural aspect of language is important to explore too. We will discuss this aspect in the next unit. The overall concept of language is that every language depends on a certain set of principles at the levels of sounds, words, grammar and usage. We simply cannot use sounds of a language in any order we like; there are very strict rules that define that order; nor can we use a grammatical structure that is not permissible by the set of principles that govern a language. Nor can we arrange the sentences of a language in any random order so that they would constitute a legitimate dialogue.

You must also know that the nature and use of language is such that it always remains in the process of change. But the process of change is so gradual that even parents think that they speak the same language that their children speak. But it is true that the language of grand children is often different from the language of grandparents.

**Check Your Progress-1**

1. *What is most the important for linguists?*

- (a) *words and sentences*                      (b) *sound system and sentence*
- (c) *dictionary and grammar*              (d) *sound system and grammar*

2. *How does environment help children to learn a language?*

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3. *Language is identity of an individual. How? Explain.*

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## 1.3 LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR

People often see different kind of differences in correct and incorrect speech. Usually when you speak in your language you can never make a mistake; even if once in a while you do make a mistake, you know how to correct it immediately. Incorrect speech is always related to the acquisition of other languages. This may also happen when we start regarding a specific variety of a language as standard. In such cases, children born into families speaking the non-standard variety often become a target of ridicule for no fault of their own. (We will elaborate this point later.)

Each language, whether you call it a language or dialect, has a grammar of its own. That language has its own sound system, grammar rules and all levels of language formation straight. We can understand this point with examples taken for each level.

### 1.3.1 STRUCTURE OF SOUND SYSTEM

Every language has its own sound system. But the sound system is such that it is finite and every language has sounds that are found in the finite system of sound structures of the world. For example, every language has vowels and consonants. They may be more or less in number. There are very few languages in the language that can have less than three vowels; rather there are some languages that have 20 vowel sounds. Consonants vary from 8-10 to 40-50. The difference between Hindi and English is the following:

	<i>Vowels</i>	<i>Consonants</i>	<i>Total</i>
English	20	24	44
Hindi	10	33	43

These sounds are not listed in the alphabetical system of the language. These are corresponding sounds of English and Hindi. That means, these have specific significance in the language and these are the minimum meaningless sounds of a language that can change the meaning of the words in a language. For example,

English-	kil	‘kill’
	pil	‘pill’
Hindi-	kal	‘tomorrow’
	pal	‘moment’

These examples show that /p/ and /k/ are significant sounds in these two languages.

But can we treat all the 43/44 sounds of either Hindi or English alike? Would these two languages have these sounds in the same sequence like the other, as the native speaker or the learner of the given language learns the alphabet system of



that language in certain sequence by the age of 4 or 5? Let us imagine a situation where we would like to put the alphabet /p/ in the consonant clusters in Hindi. Do you think, in such a situation, any other consonant of Hindi can cluster with the /p/ sound of Hindi? Look at the following examples:

\*pkav      \*pkhil      \*pgel      \*pchav      \*pchil      \*pchel  
 \*ptav      \*ptil      \*pthel      \*ptav      \*ptil      \*pthel

Are these possible words in Hindi? If no, then what is the rule in Hindi?

Look at rules in Hindi.

**Rule – 1:** If a word starts with a consonant cluster and the first consonant is /p/ then the consonants that can cluster with /p/ are /y/, /r/, /l/, and /v/ only and none else.

Following this phonological rule, you can make any word or find a word that has such a cluster in the dictionary.

Let's look at another phonological rule. Let's try to understand how many consonantal sounds (not letters) can appear together before a vowel sound appears. You would notice that no Indian language including English allows to have four consonantal sounds at the beginning of a word. See that in English in a word such as 'Psychology' (where you see 5 consonant letters at the beginning), there is actually ONLY one consonantal sound i.e. 's'. The word 'psychology' is actually pronounced as /saikoloji/. However, the English word 'stress' has three consonantal sounds such as, /s/, /t/ and /r/ at the beginning of a word. It is the same in the word 'street'. Let us look at some such clusters in Hindi and English.

Hindi -      'smriti'                  memory  
                  'skru'                      screw

English- spray, street, scratch, splash, squash etc

Don't Hindi or English have any word that can start with a consonant cluster of 4 or more sounds? Recall if the languages you know have such a cluster. Now let us make the second rule for Hindi sound system.

**Rule 2:**

- (a) Not more than 4 consonantal sounds can precede a vowel in the word initial position
- (b) If 3 consonant sounds occur in a cluster then we have to arrange them in a row. Let's refer to consonantal sounds as C1, C2 and C3.

C1 can only be /s/ sound

C2 can only be /p/, /t/ and /k/



C3 can only be /y/, /r/, /l/ and /v/ sounds

It should be clear to you how well organised and systematic is the rule system of a language at the level of sounds.

### 1.3.2 WORD FORMATION

Language is systematically organised at the level of words also. There are fixed rules about how a singular would be converted into plural or a noun to adjective. Rules are so systematic that they clearly differentiate consonant ending words from vowel ending words and also words ending with different vowel sounds.

In Hindi, ‘ghar/ meaning house’ and ‘laRkaa/ meaning boy’ are masculine words. They are singular too. What would be the plural of these two words? Of course we do know about it, but we need to know how to put them into systematic rules that all the children who learn Hindi know about and discuss it in detail. Now you tell me whether “laRke/ boys” is singular or plural. Let us look at some sentences:

1. laRke fuTbol khel rahe haiN
2. laRke ne khaanaa khaayaa
3. mohan ke paas kai ghar haiN
4. yah ghar bahut sundar hai

Sentence 1 and 3 make it clear that ‘laRke’ and ‘ghar’ are plural because in both the cases the plural marker ‘haiN’ has been used in the verb. But notice that in sentences 2 and 4, the same word ‘laRke’ is singular in number.

Let us now investigate this rule in detail because English and many other languages of the world have only one word for the corresponding word in plural. Therefore, let us assume that even Hindi would definitely have one plural number for its words. But this is somehow not the rule in Hindi. Sanskrit not only has singular, dual and plural, but it also has 15/16 different forms. In Hindi, there are 2 or 3 and even multiple plural markers for each noun, and all are rule bound. In most of the cases, there is only one number system, either in singular or in plural, for one word. Consider the following table and see how such a system gets exemplified in words such ‘laRkaa’ and ‘ghar’.

#### ghar ‘house’

<i>Function</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
kartaa kaarak/ Nominative	ghar	ghar
bibhakti puurv/ Elsewhere	ghar	gharoN
sambodhan/ Vocative	ghar!	gharo!



**laRkaa 'boy'**

Function	Singular	Plural
karta/ Nominative case	laRkaa	laRke
bibhakti purba/ Elsewhere	laRke	laRkoN
sambodhan/Vocative	laRke!	laRko!

In Hindi, every noun can have six forms in principle if we consider form and function together. Many forms may look the same but have different functions in different contexts. So, /laRke/ 'boys' can be both singular and plural. This is the reason why the word 'laRke' is plural in the nominative subject position, singular before 'ne' etc. and in the vocative case. If you look at the forms, you will notice that the word 'ghar' for example has three forms such as – 'ghar', 'gharoN', and 'gharo'. The word 'laRkaa' too has four forms such as – 'laRkaa', 'laRke', laRkoN' and 'laRko'. But at the level of usage they have six forms or case based positions. In those six case positions the word 'laRkaa' looks like the following:

5. laRkaa khel rahaa hai
6. laRke khel rahe haiN
7. laRke ne khaanaa khaaya
8. laRkon ne khaanaa khaayaa
9. O laRke, idhar aa
10. O laRko , idhar aao !

In sentence 5, 'laRkaa' is singular, in sentence 6 'laRke' is plural and they act as subjects of the sentence. But in sentence 7, 'laRke' is singular because it is followed by the postposition 'ne'. In sentence 8 'laRkoN' is plural; it is in fact the plural of sentence 7. In sentence 9 'laRke' is singular in vocative and in sentence 10 the 'laRko' is plural in vocative.

Let us take another example from the world of word formation rules. There are several rules in Hindi and English that converts a noun into an adjective. For example, 'rain', 'fun', 'sun', 'fish', 'cloud' etc. These nouns can be converted to adjectives by adding 'y' in English. So the adjectives of those words are- 'funny', 'sunny', 'fishy', 'cloudy' etc. Hindi has a group of nominal words that change their grammatical category and become adjective by addition of 'i' vowel sound. For example, 'sarkar', 'baazaar', 'baigan', 'apraadh' etc become 'sarkarii', 'baazaarii', 'baigani', 'apraadhii' etc.

### 1.3.3 SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION

Compare sentence 5 to 10 with the following sentences:

11. laRkii khel rahii thii



12. laRkiyaaN khel rahiiN thiiN
13. laRki ne khaanaa khaayaa
14. laRkiyoN ne khaanaaa khaayaa
15. laRke ne laRkii ko maaraa
16. laRkii ne laRke ko maaraa
17. laRke ne roTii khaayii
18. laRkii ne roTii khaayii

A careful look at sentences 5 to 18 suggests that language is highly rule-governed at the level of sentences as well. You cannot arrange words in any random order to form a sentence. In fact, as compared to the level of words, language is more tightly organised at the level of sentences. Sentences 5,6,9,10,11 and 12 make it clear that the relationship between subject and verb is very significant in Hindi. It's important to note that the verb agrees with the subject as per the gender, person and number of the subject noun. The following sentences make it clearer:

- raam khaanaa khaataa hai
- siitaa khaanaa khaatii hai
- tuu khaanaa khaataa hai
- tum khaanaa khaate ho
- tum khaanaa khaati ho
- aap khaanaa khaate haiN
- aap khaanaa khaatii haiN
- maiN khaanaa khaata huuN
- maiN khaanaa khaatii huuN
- ham khaanaa khaate haiN
- ham khaanaa khaatii haiN

These sentences can give you a glimpse of the complex relationship that exists between subject and verb in Hindi.

Let us return to sentence 5 to 18. Let us see whether we see the same similarity between subject and verb in the case of sentences 7,8,13,14,15,16,17 and 18 compared to sentence 5,6,9,10,11 and 12. In sentence 7 and 8 the verb changes as per the object and not as per the subject. The same is the case with 17 and 18. In 7 and 8, object is masculine and the verb is also masculine in form. In 17 and 18, object is feminine and the verb is also feminine. It doesn't matter whether the



verb is masculine or feminine. The rule is- if the subject takes a case such as an ergative case then the verb agrees with the object. In 13 and 14 the object is feminine. Let us see what happens in case of sentence 15 and 16 and see how the verb is governed there. In these two sentences subject and object both are followed by postpositions such as 'ne' and 'ko'. In such cases, the verb is always in the neutral past i.e. what we would use with the third person like 'he' in the simple past as in 'vah bhaagaa'.

### 1.3.4 DISCOURSE STRUCTURE

The way sound system, word formation and sentence structure are totally rule bound, in the same way, the social communication is rule bound and we cannot cross the norms of communicative rules. For example, there is a basic rule that you should never speak in between a conversation as a third person. Sometimes, we make blunders in communication because we do not simply listen to the other person carefully. Sometime, the listener gets very upset in the middle of a talk and by the time the talk ends, he gets to know that what he thought he was hearing was not what was being talked about. Language is crucially related to understanding it in the right dimension. For example, words in Hindi like 'isliye, usne, par, aur, kyonki etc' are so important that you cannot really understand the meaning of the communication unless you give importance to these words. For example, if a man says, "mujhe isliye der ho gayii kyonki raste main trafik bahut thaa" meaning "I got delayed because there was heavy traffic on the road." If we will remove the words 'isliye' meaning 'which is why or because' then the sentence becomes meaningless. At the level of effective understanding, a sentence becomes meaningful when effective words are used in an effective sequence. When the order of those words will be scrambled the meaning of the sentence will also change.

#### Check Your Progress-2

1. *How many forms a noun can have in Hindi?*

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| (i) <i>Five</i>  | (ii) <i>Three</i> |
| (iii) <i>Two</i> | (iv) <i>Six</i>   |

2. *If a word will start with three consonants then,*

- *The first consonant can only be /s/*
- *The second consonants can only be /p/, /t/, or /k/*
- *The third consonants can only be /y/, /r/, /l/ or /v/*

*Give examples to support your answers*

3. *raam khaanaa khaataa hai*  
*siitaa khaanaa khaati hai*



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*Explain the relationship between subject and verb taking these two sentences as example sentences.*

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### 1.4 STANDARD LANGUAGE

Language standardization follows certain steps. As a first step, the language that is called standard language is the language that had been chosen to be called the standard language from the many other existing languages of that linguistic area or society. This language has certain status in that society. In the Brahmanic society, Sanskrit used to be the standard language. When the Arabs ruled, Arabic became the standard language and if the Iranians will rule, Persian will be the standard language. When British rule came, English became the standard language ignoring all the hundreds of languages that existed in India at that time. Now Hindi and English both are official language or standard language. Now when we speak about English, that English is standard that is found in Oxford dictionary or spoken in and around Oxford or Cambridge. When we speak about Hindi, Khadi boli would be talked about and Braj variety or Avadhi variety will only be considered dialects of Hindi. In the third step, the chosen variety will have a grammar written on its rules and various kinds of dictionaries will be made. There would be many discussions and structural and analytical books written on that variety of language too which is called Standard language. That standard language becomes the language of media, administration, judiciary and formal education. This variety gets taught in text books and it spreads this way. That's Hindi in this context. The fourth or last stage of standardization is that the language gets the opportunity to be developed in every other way such as cinema, literature, music and so on and so forth.

Standardization process is very highly related to the process of social exploitation. The language that gets chosen as the standard language of the many other languages spoken in that area is the language that has political power, corporate power and other necessary powers.

#### Check Your Progress-3

1. The standardized language often belongs to a social class which possesses \_\_\_\_\_
2. How is the process of standardization related to social exploitation?



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3. Language by character keeps changing. So how far is it viable to standardize a language? Give your reasons on this account.

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### 1.5 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE

It is definite that language is very deeply seated in human brain/mind. It's been noticed that when a certain part of head is hit, the language imbalance results. Sometimes, the affected person loses the ability to understand whereas other time he loses the ability to speak. Sometimes the word formation gets distorted and sometimes the sentence construction.

The second point to note is, probably every child is born with a universal grammar. Language is pictured in that mind the we talk, walk, sit , sleep etc. Every child knows in his mind that every language has nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, punctuations, subject, object etc. By this capacity, a child learns the languages spoken in his community by the time he is three or four. We have discussed in 1.4 that the language formation is done at a rule bound manner in every stage. If would have not conceived the notion of universal grammar then we could not have found it so easy to explain how come a child of the age 3 / 4 acquires his language so scientifically and correctly so untutored. You have noticed that no one makes any basic grammatical mistake or word level mistakes in his language and if by chance he does, then he immediately corrects them. Kids of that age will always pronounce 'scooter' as 'kooter' and 'garm' as 'garam'. Even at the level of sentence construction, children find it difficult to acquire complex grammar so easily and they use words that they can easily speak and not complex or difficult words. So a Hindi speaking kid would say,' kul jana' in stead of saying the full sentence , ' aaj mujhe school jana hai.'.

In short, children are born with a universal grammar, they have a psychological readiness about language acquisition and this readiness gets completed with the environmental exposure, which are all natural and untutored. And the journey of language acquisition continues with a tutored set up as he goes to school.



**Check your Progress-4**

- 1. (a) Children have the \_\_\_\_\_ ability about language acquisition.
- (b) Every child is born with a \_\_\_\_\_ ability of language acquisition.

2. What kind of language disorder can emerge if a part of brain gets damaged?  
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3. Children are born with the ability to speak. But does that mean that if we would leave a child in a forest, he would still be able to speak? If not, then what else is important for language learning apart from the inborn quality of language learning.  
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4. What is the difference between tutored language learning and natural language acquisition?  
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**1.6 THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE**

We have talked about language and society before. When children learn language they not only learn the language in its correct form, they also learn the way a given language is used in the society. Children learn it very quickly how to behave themselves linguistically vis a vis people, places and occasion. This is how they learn the various structures and various styles of language usage.

In spite of having a universal grammar, the child learns that language that he hears from his environment. Actually, our choice of words, our selection of sentences are always dependent on the factors such as, the context, the person who speak to, the place where we speak and the theme. You don't speak to your father about your school work the same way as you speak to your mom about your food etc. You cannot use the same language with your teachers the language you use with your friends.



Social differences and stratifications are prominently observed the way we use language. Sometimes the people of different castes use different styles of the same language. Language changes in every 15 to 20 kilometres. It is often dependent on the way sentences are constructed and words are formed and even the way how words are pronounced. The moment you open your mouth you disclose your identity. Where you come from, what kind of family you belong to and what sort of people form your friend circle gets know the moment you say even a small word such as 'hello'.

In Delhi, some people say 'majja' and others say 'mazza'; some say 'zafar' and some say 'jafar'. The way of talking can tell whether the speaker is educated or uneducated, poor or rich or old Delhi or new Delhi and the like. Whether you are calling your school 'skul' or 'sakul' that too makes a lot of difference. This way linguistic identity is directly related to social identity.

In the next unit we will discuss the multilingual character of India. The same person speaks the same language in various ways or various languages in different social and professional circles. It's very common feature of Indian society that a college going girl speaks Marwari at home, Hindi with her friends and English at college. And it is also possible that she prays in Sanskrit at home and temple. This type of linguistic behaviour is generally noticed in multilingual nations. In all multilingual nations people decide which language to use and how to use that language based on the place where they are communicating. For example, in America the English that is spoken in roadside areas is different from the English that is spoken in academic fields and universities.

### Check Your Progress-5

1. *In which of the following areas does language change in every 15 to 20 kilometres*
  - (a) *At the level of sentence structure*
  - (b) *At the level of word formation*
  - (c) *At the level of sound structure*
  - (d) *At the level of communicative styles*

## 1.7 LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Language is perfect in all its styles. Understanding someone else's speech by hearing it, understanding one's own speech having said it and even reading something. But the style of language that comes to us through literature is really fascinating. It's always a challenge for a linguist to be able to analyse a specific style of language used in a poem, story, drama or novels etc. Effective analysis



of language at the level of sound, word formation, sentence structure as it is used stylistically in literature in its various forms can help us to know how is the language of ordinary usage different from the language of literature. Try and transform the following into simple prose:

‘karat karat abhyaas ke jaDmati hot sujaan’

You will notice that the arrangement of words is crucially different.

Crucially significant differences between language of ordinary usage and language of literature can be found in the areas of simile, appreciation, synonyms, parody etc also.

**Check Your Progress-6**

1. *Take a poem you like. Render it into simple prose. What kind of differences do you notice?*

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2. *What is the difference between metaphor and simile?*

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3. *In Hindi you can say ‘ghar-ghar’ and also ‘ghar-var’, something you can’t do in English. What’s the difference between ‘ghar-ghar’ and ‘ghar-var’ like expressions?*

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**1.8 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

When can we say that a person is fully proficient in her language? There are two aspects to this question. One, as we have already shown a 4 year old child is fully proficient in her language in that she knows the basic grammar and vocabulary and all the rules to put sounds into words and words into sentences. On the other



hand, you never become fully proficient in any language because there is always more to learn, new words, new expressions etc. In this context, it is important to understand the nature of the context in which a given language is being learnt. Broadly speaking, there can be two contexts: informal or formal. The informal context is the natural context of the family, friends and the neighbourhood in which all children normally learn their languages. In these contexts there is rarely any formal intervention by the parents and relatives. Parents generally treat the 'errors' of their children with a sense of joy and affection. The strange thing is that children still learn language in all its richness and complexity. In the formal context, we obtain all kinds of support systems including schools, teachers, materials, new methods of teaching, radio, TV, CD player and a language lab. The striking thing is that in spite of all this children still fail to learn language. This of course is true if children are exposed to several languages at a young age in a natural environment, they easily learn all those without any support systems. We will return to these issues in greater detail in Unit 3.

So far the issue of measuring language proficiency is concerned; we have all been for a long time obsessed with measuring separately LSRW skills. We are fully aware that language proficiency can only be captured in their working as a whole rather than as discrete skills. For example, if you call a doctor with some problem and need some medical advice urgently, you speak and explain your problem, you understand his response and then you write down the names of the medicines counterchecking with him the names reading them again. So all the skills and language processing with comprehension are often used simultaneously. We talk about this in greater detail in Unit 10.

Here we conclude that all children are competent in their OWN languages before they come to school and it is of utmost importance that teachers and education system as a whole recognise this enormous potential of children.

**Check Your Progress-7**

1. *What is missing in the formal environment of school:*  
*(a) teachers (b) books (c) language lab (d) caring home environment*

2. *How does a child acquire proficiency in her home languages?*  
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3. *How should we measure language proficiency?*  
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## 1.9 LET US SUM UP

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- Language is not just a pairing of a grammar and a dictionary or simply a means of communication. It is much more.
- Language is constitutive of being human. It is a marker of a speaker's identity.
- Language defines the relationship among the members of a society and encodes the social hierarchies.
- A normal child in any society in any part of the world becomes a linguistic adult by the age of 4. She acquires the basic vocabulary and structure of her languages and uses them accurately.
- Every language has a grammar of its own and is rule-governed at the levels of sounds, words, sentences and dialogue.
- Language is constantly changing; the language of grandparents is different from the language of grandchildren.
- Every language has its own grammatical structure but languages will have vowels and consonants and nouns, verbs and adjectives. Sounds cannot be put together at random; there are rules that define their combinations. Similarly words cannot be put together at random.
- The processes of language standardisation are closely associated with processes of exploitation; those that have the power make all the decisions.
- All children are born with and an innate endowment for language acquisition consisting of a Universal Grammar. They learn languages around them without any formal instruction. They only need a caring environment and some language input.
- A child not only acquires linguistic competence but also communicative competence to be able to use language appropriately in different contexts.
- Language of literature differs from the language of day today conversation.
- Assessment should be holistic rather than discrete in terms of just LSRW.

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## 1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 1.11 UNIT-END EXERCISES

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1. Do language and society influence each other? Illustrate your answer.
2. What do you understand by multilinguality? Are you a bi-/multilingual?
3. Show how language is rule governed at the levels sounds, words and sentences.
4. In Hindi, if you add 'ii' to some nouns, they become adjectives such as: sarkaar-sarkaarii; apraadh-apraadhii etc. Identify some other way ways of making adjectives from nouns.
5. Elaborate the stages in the process of language standardisation.
6. How does language change in terms of person, place and topic? Illustrate with suitable examples.
7. What are some of the differences between the language of literature and day today language?
8. What role does environment play in language acquisition?

### ACTIVITY

- Children often face difficulties in school because the language of education is different from the languages of home. Observe some classes and make a list of such problems.
- Do you think children who are taught through the languages of their neighbourhood face similar problems? Make observations in a suitable school.
- Record some of your conversations with a four year old child. Show how she knows the grammar of her language.