Emergent Literacy
A Developmental Perspective of Literacy

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Abstract

Seeing literacy (including early reading) from a developmental perspective is a great achievement. It has not only contributed in the formulation of reading-writing instructions from a child-centred perspective but also has given the world a perspective which believes that preschool literacy experiences are equally valuable. The purpose of this paper is to bring forth the significance of developmental and holistic nature of literacy by reviewing the researches on two contrasting views: Reading Readiness Perspective and Emergent Literacy Perspective. The paper also interprets developmental perspective of literacy in the light of Vygotskian theory of literacy and development and Marie Clay's contribution in early literacy. Early literacy in Indian context is also reviewed in the light of emergent literacy framework in the later section of this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Looking at literacy learning before young children receive formal reading and writing instructions is a recent interest adopted by reading researchers since 1960. This understanding is popularly known as 'Emergent Literacy'. The study of emergent literacy represents a new perspective which stresses that legitimate, developmental literacy learning occurs during the initial years of a child's life (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). It entails the idea that social and linguistic context for literacy acquisition plays a significant role in the course of literacy development. Children begin to explore the language in varied forms before their encounter with literacy in a formal school setting. It legitimises the earliest literacy concepts and behaviours of children and acknowledges the multiplicity

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of social contexts in which children are becoming literate (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). Such literacy related behaviours are unlike the behaviours of conventional readers and writers, but they are covered with various assumptions about literacy. The emergent literacy also presents social interactive view of literacy. Chomsky (1956) in his language acquisition research stated that young children are active constructors of language rules. They hypothesize and generate rules on their own while actively engaging in communication with others. Thus, the communication patterns and practices, parent-child interactions and parent-child literacy activities act as critical support for the acquisition of reading and writing concepts. Early reading research with this shift in perspective characterises young children's early reading behaviours in a new manner.

Education is a major concern for a developing country like India. The interest in early reading and a shift in perspective on early reading are also relatively recent in India.

According to Sinha (2010), in India, literacy pedagogy (including early literacy instructions) is still primarily traditional, where the focus is overwhelmingly on sounds rather than meaning. Such practices have led to a high dropout rate in Indian schools (Kumar, 2004). Socio-cultural background of the child is the reason often quoted for it. This paper questions the other less mentioned reasons like inadequacy of the literacy experiences provided in the school, which just end up being meaningless for the child and having no relation with the real world. It is the need of the hour to reflect upon education in primary years of schooling from the lens of emergent literacy paradigm which holds the belief that literacy learning is developmental in nature. However, before presenting this new perspective, it is equally essential to understand the various notions about early reading and writing attempts, that arise from the reading readiness perspective and its implications to reading.

TWO PERSPECTIVES OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG LEARNERS

'How people respond to children in their initial stages of literacy learning depends upon what they believe about literacy development.' (Raban, 1997, p. 20). In the field of education, there are two predominant, conflicting views about how learning, particularly learning to read, takes place. The two views are reading readiness perspective and emergent literacy perspective.

Reading Readiness Perspective

Reading readiness theory has undergone several transformations in its application over the past 100 years (Mason, 1984). It had its emphasis on a maturational viewpoint in the early stages of the movement, but reading readiness theorists eventually adopted a behaviouristic model of instruction asserting that children's

readiness could be influenced through direct instruction.

The dominant theory from the 1920s–1950s was that reading readiness was the result of biological maturation. From this perspective, it was believed that the mental processes necessary for reading would unfold automatically at a certain period of time in development. The view held by reading readiness theorists was that development is controlled by maturation which results from neural ripening. Therefore, all kinds of children's thinking were seen as resulting from motor development, largely being unaffected by the environment. As a result of this view, 'waiting' until child is mature was considered essential for any kind of learning.

The reading readiness perspective was influenced by this maturational view (giving instructions only to the most mature). It was believed that readiness to read was the result of neural ripening. Therefore, if the child is not yet ready to read, wait. Instructions should be postponed until readiness was established.

During the late 1950s and 1960s, the dominant theory shifted from reading readiness as maturation, toward readiness as the product of experience (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). Proponents of this viewpoint argued that if children had the appropriate experiences, their reading readiness could be accelerated. In response to this shift in thinking, educators and parents were encouraged to use more

direct instructions and structured curriculum in early childhood in order to prepare children for reading. In the 1970s, researchers began to challenge traditional reading readiness attitudes and practices. As a result, educational world took an interventionist posture, taking into account the role of environmental factors. However, the influence environmental factors can have on a child learning to read has been taken in a narrow sense. For instance, activities to develop auditory and visual discrimination and auditory and visual memory were given importance. The curriculum believed in providing such a set of basic sequenced prerequisite skills which could help mastering reading later on. Writing was expected to be delayed until the child learns to read. Here, literacy was used in a formal way; the functional use of literacy was not given any attention. The task of learning to write waited until enough training was given on reading. Children were considered literate only after their reading and writing began to approximate adult models. (Mason, 1984; Teale and Sulzby, 1986; Mason and Sinha, 1993).

This way, the reading readiness perspective affected people's thinking about literacy development in two ways. Firstly, it conceptualises early childhood period as precursor to real reading. It implies that 'only after the child has mastered the various sub-skills of reading readiness does the real part begins.' (Teale

and Sulzby, 1986, p.177). Second implication is that learning to read and write begins only in a school-like setting as readiness skills can only be taught in schools.

Debatable Issues in the Perspective

Many issues were raised and debated by scholars regarding this perspective. Like Mason and Sinha (1993) pointed out various issues. First issue with this perspective is the assumption about the nature of reading, which has been viewed in a dichotomous manner by reading readiness theorists. Reading is taken as 'all' or 'none' phenomena. Secondly, the very nature of reading is also misunderstood. Reading has been considered as a decoding process, which is finding the oral equivalent of written language. Thus, a child who knows other aspects of literacy but still not able to decode, is viewed as a non-reader. Third issue is the suggestion that maturation in sensory motor skills is assumed transported reading skills. Skills, like spotting differences, visual discrimination, listening discrimination and fine motor skills, were supposed to indicate readiness in reading. It was also believed that children develop reading skills from general cognitive and motor skills, whereas researchers state that children, who experience reading even informally, do develop reading skills (Mason, 1984). Lastly, it is questionable to wait and delay the exposure to reading until children reach a certain developmental level.

Emergent Literacy: An Alternative Perspective

Shortcomings in the reading readiness perspective mostly come from a new perspective, popularly known as emergent literacy perspective. Most of the literacy acquisition researchers have accepted the paradigm of 'emergent literacy'. One of such researchers is Marie Clay, who coined the term emergent literacy for this perspective. Emergent literacy gives legitimacy to children's early, non-conventional reading and writing behaviours. The term 'emergent' connotes development rather than stasis; it signifies something in the process of becoming (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). Similarly, 'literacy' denotes the interrelatedness of reading and writing in young children's development.

According to this perspective, the process of becoming readers is facilitated by children's active involvement in language and print activities rather than providing mechanical drill and practice. Emergent literacy perspective views literacy as a process of discovery and exploration of print. Thus, this view is in contrast with reading readiness perspective, which puts emphasis on perceptual motor skills and abstract isolated aspects of print. The other shifting perspectives provided by emergent literacy theory are as follows:

- Literacy emerges before children are taught to read in formal settings like schools.
- Literacy is defined in a holistic manner. Hence, reading is not merely decoding rather other major aspects are also involved in the act of reading. For instance, knowledge about directionality, reading print in context, meaning making and so on.
- The notion of reading preceding writing or vice-versa is a misconception. Oral and written aspects of language develop concurrently and are interrelated.
- Literacy develops in real life settings. Thus, functional aspects of literacy are as important as mechanical aspects.
- Children learn reading and writing through active engagement with their world. They profit from modelling of literacy by significant adults. Active agency of child as well as social setting is considered significant.
- Language is learned through use rather than through practice exercises (Harste and Woodward, 1989).

Emergent literacy perspective views children's attempts to read and write in informal settings (before formal schooling begins) as significant as their engagements with formal literacy instructions in school. Such early reading-writing behaviours of children predictive not pre of anything, but are considered as integral parts of literacy learning which is in a state of becoming. Therefore, emergent literacy perspective views reading and writing as developmental in nature rather than seeing reading as 'all' or 'none' phenomena (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). This way, emergent literacy perspective supports the natural gradual development of a young child's listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities. Children begin to explore the literacy in varied forms before their encounter with formal school. There is a shift of emphasis from teaching of reading and writing to facilitating children's learning by their active engagement in print activities as per emerging literacy perspective.

The emergent literacy perspective gives due emphasis to both reading and writing skills in early years of life. It represents a needed shift in emphasis from an absence of writing in early grades' curriculum to integration of writing and reading. It is not about emergent writing alone, nor emergent reading alone, but about emergent literacy (Harste, Burke and Woodward, 1982; Teale and Sulzby, 1986).

With Vygostsky's valuable ideas, literacy is no longer regarded as simply a cognitive skill but as a complex activity with social, linguistic and psychological aspects. The social setting for literacy learning is also given due emphasis in emergent literacy perspective. Vygotsky's ideas on learning and development extended the notion of the child as a single

player in his/her literacy learning by hypothesising and exploring about the world. He believed that children learn particularly by engaging in activities with experienced and knowledgeable significant others. According to Cambourne (1988), 'certain conditions must operate to permit language learning to occur.' Therefore, it is apparent that learning mechanical aspects of reading and writing in drill and practice sessions cannot add more to a child's literacy learning rather their learning must be accompanied by understanding the functional uses of language. Such functional aspects of literacy are better learned in the day-to-day activities in social settings. This also features holistic view of language. Emergent literacy entails the view that functions of literacy are as integral part of learning to read and write as are the other forms of literacy.

The next section briefs about Vygotskian framework of development and learning and Marie Clay's experiences of literacy learning with young children. Vygotskian theory of development and learning has so much to offer; especially to understand the social nature of literacy learning and the concept of interaction which is often used in emergent literacy perspective. Marie Clay's contributions to the field of early reading and writing provide us with significant experiences to understand the nature of young learners' early attempts of reading and writing.

VYGOTSKY AND EMERGENT LITERACY

Lev Semyo novich Vygotsky is a renowned name in the field of developmental theory. His publications 'Thought and Language' and 'Mind in Society' launched him as a major thinker in western psychology. His concern was with situating the mind within a socio-cultural setting and a historical perspective. He believed that higher mental functioning and human actions is mediated by tools and signs. His understanding of language development and development of literacy skills are placed within this framework.

Vygotskian theory focuses on the social constructs of development. It provides an explanation of how changing social interaction between learner and significant adult leads the learner towards proficiency. Various constructs were introduced by Vygotsky to explain this like adult modelling, scaffolding and the zone of proximal development. These constructs seem to be replacing the traditional way of teacher directed learning and believe in drill and practice routines.

Keeping these constructs in mind, the reading readiness theory which features 'all' or 'none' belief about the nature of reading can be critiqued from Vygotskian perspective. According to Vygotskian theory, literacy development is a complex social phenomenon, grounded in children's spoken language competence. That is reading and writing are multifaceted

and their emergence is supported by children's interactions with one another and with helpful adults (Richgels, 2013).

According to him, development occurs in two interactive but qualitatively different processes. The first category of processes is biological in origin and second processes are socio-cultural in nature. Such socio-cultural processes are not biologically given but culturally acquired. In the light of this understanding of development, it is a simplistic model of development to see reading development merely as a result of neural ripening whereas reading in reality is a sophisticated and culturally acquired skill. Vygotsky believed that learning cannot be explained by looking at the learner only, but it must include the context in which the learner has developed.

Language comes out of a need to communicate with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning is a matter of internalising language and actions of others. Family, social and cultural contexts support learning to read, speak and write. As per Vygotskian theory, reading stories to children benefit their literacy development. Vygotsky believed that interaction between adults and children is a Critical aspect of literacy learning. The concept of interaction has also been used by emergent literacy researchers, for instance, while discussing story reading to children in shared reading (Mason and Sinha,

1993). To describe such interaction and literacy activities, terms like scaffolding and interactive nature of learning are often used. Such interactive activities can better be studied with the help of Vygotsky's theory of zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD focuses not only on the completed level of development (the stage of development where the child can solve the problem independently) but also on the expected level of development where the child solves a problem with the help of an expert (such experts can be teachers, peers or parents) (Mason and Sinha, 1993). Most emergent literacy research is compatible with the theory of ZPD. Storytelling by an adult serves a good example. Teale and Sulzby (1986) suggest in their review that storybook reading is a socially related and interactive activity. An adult reading a story to the child is functioning in the child's ZPD (Mason and Sinha, 1993). There are certain concepts about the story that the child may already know, for instance, the concept of considering each picture of a storybook separately, as a single unit. With the help of the adult acting as a mediator between the child and the text, the child is able to reach those areas developmentally, where in the child cannot function alone, for instance, being able to see pictures in an integrated manner to form a story, using them to predict, think of another ending and so on. The child may not be reading the story independently but engages with it with the help of

significant others. As Vygotsky (1978) also says, 'The teacher must Orient his work on yesterday devlopment in the child but on tomorrow's. Another example to explain the theory of ZPD is language experience approach. In this process, the child dictates one's experience and the adult writes it. The child may know how to narrate his/her experience, but with the help of the adult's modelling, the child learns the conventions of writing and the aspects of writing process.

Early literacy experiences in the home can have an impact on the child's development as a reader and writer in school: storybook reading, and talking about pictures and words, writing for real purposes modelled by caregivers, parents, older siblings, etc. Reading, because of its complexity, cannot be expected to develop without assistance from others. Therefore, formal schooling provides assistance in teaching reading. Reading instructions need not be delayed but does need to be supported. Supporting reading instructions before formal schooling begins — is a major idea introduced by emergent literacy theorists. Also, teaching of reading must be grounded in adult-child interaction. Learner engagement in reading writing tasks is a process to be mediated and one that is crucial to achieve more independent functioning. Learners while learning literacy skills move from a cooperative to an independent mode of reading and writing.

This way, Vygotsky's ideas on development and learning are very well connected with the emergent literacy perspective.

MARIE CLAY AND EMERGENT LITERACY

'Preschool children can learn about many visual features of print, how to write some letters, know how to write some words, can pretend to write notes or letters to family and friends, or dictate stories they want written for them. They can do all this before they have begun to consider how the words, they say may be coded into print, and in particular how the sounds of speech are coded in print.' (Clay, 2002, p.19)

Marie Clay was another pioneer who developed emergent literacy perspective and applied it to understand early reading attempts of young learners. In fact, 'Emergent Literacy term is coined by Marie Clay (1966), which that refers to the beginning of literacy or the process of becoming literate. Her research focused on the formative years of literacy learning. The work of Marie Clay has provided the foundation for new ways of studying and thinking about early literacy. She did her doctoral research work in the area of early reading. She investigated instead about whether one can see the process of learning to read and write going astray at the beginning. An important outcome of her dissertation was the development of reliable observation tools for the assessment and analysis

of changes over time in children's early literacy learning. Her work, *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (1991) constitutes all these assessments. From her research work, she published the book — *Reading: The Patterning of Complex Behaviour* (1979). In her research work, she found reading to involve the integration of four sources of information: language, concepts about print, visual motor skills and sound sequences in words. Clay's research work brings forth the point that children's movement into reading is not marked by a clear boundary between the reader and non-reader. This was also emphasised by Mason and Allen (1986). They believed that 'reading acquisition' is better conceptualised as a developmental continuum rather than 'all or none' phenomenon.

'Reading Recovery' is one of the Clay's important contributions to education. This research project was developed from the concerns of classroom teachers who, despite following well–designed reading programmes, were not able to change the path of progress for particular children. One of the main ideas introduced and fostered through various reading recovery programmes by Marie Clay is that literature based approach to literacy is highly successful with many students with different needs. The 'Whole Language' movement has also given renewed attention to this (Goodman, 1997).

The other critical argument presented by Clay (1979) is that literacy learning or learning to read and write should be perceived as 'multidimensional and tied to the child's natural surroundings' (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). So, it needs to be studied in both home and school environments. She was amongst the first to acknowledge that learning to read and write begin much early in life and is ongoing. This way, like Vygotsky, she also highlighted the significance of social setting of children in order to develop literacy skills. She believed that young children who live in print-rich environment are constantly observing and learning about reading and writing. Most of their literacy learning occurs as a natural part of their early lives. Such literacy learning requires active participation of children in meaningful activities. She believed that activities like shared book reading play a significant role in young children's literacy development. This way, children learn about written language as they actively engage with adults in reading and writing situations, explore print on their own, and as they observe others around them engaged in literacy activities.

Following points are the gist of her critical arguments which she presented after studying literacy behaviours of young children for years as they learned to read and write.

Literacy development is a continuous process

As discussed earlier, the concept of reading readiness suggests that there is a point in time when children are ready to learn to read and write, whereas the concept emergent literacy, as Clay believed, suggests that there are continuities in children's literacy development between early literacy behaviours and those displayed once children could read independently. Clay believes that children begin to develop literacy long before they begin attending formal instructions in a school-like setting. The term emergent implies that there is something new emerging, and development is taking place. Children become literate, growth in reading-writing comes from within the child and as a result of interaction with the social environment. Hence, she believed that there is no frontier in the development process of literacy, rather literacy learning follows along a developmental continuum.

Reading and writing are complex problem solving processes

After detailed observations of early readers, Clay described reading as a message–getting activity and problem solving activity. She believed that reading and writing are complex problem solving processes. Marie Clay (1991) provides an account of all those complex behaviours and competencies which support literacy learning. She lists the various aspects of reading development as oral language, vocabulary and concepts about print. When children read and write, they bring, use and apply information from a variety of sources, assimilate new information, make a decision and monitor their processes in a continuous cycle of learning. Readers and writers apply strategies to solve problems as they acquire the skills of constructing meaning while reading. She believed that there are no simplified ways to engage in the complex activities like reading and writing.

Reading and writing are interrelated processes

Clay (1979) also emphasised the importance of the relationship between writing and reading in early literacy development.

Reading and writing develop at the same time and are interrelated in young children, rather than being sequential. Literacy involves the ability of listening, speaking, reading and writing developing at the same time in an interrelated manner. Reading and writing processes contribute to each other in early literacy learning.

Children construct their own understanding

Clay believes that children begin to develop literacy long before they begin attending formal instructions in a school-like setting. The child is considered as the active constructor of meaning. The child must actively work on printed messages using one's

abilities and previous knowledge. The underlying assumption here is that only the child can control this inner construct. A teacher can only support or facilitate the process of construction. Teachers should also be observers. Clay introduced the concept of observing reading behaviours to determine what sources of information a child is using or neglecting, whether the child is self-monitoring, self-correcting and problem solving while reading. The teacher, with systematic observations, can encourage readers to engage in using strategies while reading and writing.

Literacy learning involves reading and writing continuous text

Readers read and write continuous texts like storybooks, not just letters, sounds or words in isolation. Since reading and writing are complex problem solving processes, the readers and writers need to experience reading and writing with its inherent complexity. Reading and writing continuous texts let children experience the same, as it requires the integration of all behaviours essential for meaningful communication.

Literacy learning involves continuous change over time with verbal interactions

Clay believed that high quality verbal interaction between parents and children eases children's path to become literate. High quality verbal interaction refers to helping children describe events, engage in verbal problem solving and form cause and effect relationship. Similarly, it is also believed that concepts about reading print can be learned very early. For instance, during storybook reading children learn and demonstrate literate behaviour like hold a book properly, turn pages and read words from left to right. Concept about print is another significant contribution by Clay. This idea holds the basic understanding that it is printed words and not pictures that reveal a message. When children know the concepts of print, it means that they are able to distinguish words from pictures, know that a book has a front and a back and know that printed words across a page in a book are read from left to right and from top to bottom (Clay, 1991). Children develop these concepts about print at early age often at home, long before entering a formal or institutional setting. Presence of print at home environment helps promoting their developing so, which is not the only critical aspect in literacy development. Rather it is the quantity and quality of interactions with print that shape early reading development (Mason and Allen, 1986).

Children bring varying knowledge to learn literacy and take different paths to literacy learning

Children enter the literacy learning processes with different profiles of competencies and motivational level. They take unique paths to literacy

learning. Marie Clay described it as different paths to common outcomes.

This way, Marie Clay's views have been helpful in re-conceptualising early literacy and acknowledging the literacy attempts/experiences of young learners as significant. She has made valuable contribution in re-conceptualising the constructs of prevention, intervention and systematic observation through Reading Recovery Programme developed by her in New Zealand.

EMERGENT LITERACY PERSPECTIVE AND INDIAN CONTEXT: CONNECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As highlighted in this paper, emergent literacy perspective has been accepted widely as a framework to review, analyse and understand the reading and writing in early years. However, it seems to be missing or having negligible influence in Indian context if one reviews the research situation and pedagogy followed in Indian classrooms. There is a need to have massive research about literacy experiences of Indian children with varied contexts and population. Sinha (2010, 2012) has been highlighting the need to research early reading-writing attempts of young learners in Indian context in her studies since the research attempt in this area is negligible in Indian context. Also, the significance of the early years of a child is not adequately recognised here. NCF 2005 has also accepted the fact that children enter school with a variety of experiences with language which should be used as a resource to further enhance their understanding. But the lack of research and adequate understanding of early literacy or training of teachers in the area of early reading and writing is also highlighted in NCF 2005, which clearly states that pre-service and in-service training programmes do not adequately address the issue of traditional ideas followed in reading pedagogy.

A few research attempts made to understand early literacy instructions reveal that in India, literacy tradition and instructional settings are primarily traditional. The focus is mainly on sound of the word rather than its meaning (Sinha, 2010). The early attempts of reading and writing are either not given due attention or taken in a narrow sense. 'Layered approach' to reading is practised in Indian classrooms (Sinha, 2010, p. 23). Literacy instruction follows a sequential approach in Indian schools. First 'sounding out the words' is practised, then meaning is given some attention. Decoding is often conceptualised as the main goal of reading. Such an approach sacrifices meaning. Although with National Curriculum Framework 2005 and new NCERT textbooks, the importance of children's literature has been recognised, the pedagogy and classroom practices are still a major concern.

Although it has been emphasised that young learners must experience

reading-writing in meaningful ways in an enabling print-rich environment, they must read volumes of book to learn reading. This can only happen when they have print-rich environment, wherein they have quality engagement with storybooks, to start with. They should have access to both materials and discussions. In Vygotsky's words, children can reach their potential level with the help of significant others who scaffold learning by organising quality interactions pre, during and post reading. However, either Indian classrooms lack quality reading materials or students have no access to such materials as they remain showcased nicely in glass cupboards only. The only book in their reach is the textbook. Hindi textbook stories are often used to teach language components like grammar and *matras.* Even if they are not used for this purpose, quality engagement with print material does not take place because the entire focus is devoted to explaining the text by the teacher and learning new words. Such pedagogy and instructional contexts push children towards reading mechanically, but with the passive role of a recipient, they push children away from considering reading as a pleasurable activity.

Heath (1990) described how children involve in the functional aspect of literacy in their communities without any access to books or stories, they just learn from one's personal experiences of using language. Yet the initial years of schooling break these patterns of using language for functional purposes and instead present 'lesson' language (p. 19). In the light of these words, there is a definite need of a complete shift from the traditional way of looking at reading and writing from emergent literacy perspective in India, which can give a better understanding of early literacy experiences of children. Emergent literacy perspective suggests that reading-writing behaviours being at birth. Instead of having drill sessions of literacy concepts, they should be built naturally. Children should get exposure to reading-writing for functional purposes.

Marie Clay also provided us with an appropriate understanding that all children learn at different levels and have different needs. Children's prior literacy experiences play a critical role in order to help them make use of any kind of direct formal instructions. Their present knowledge and previous experiences should be acknowledged as potential ones. However, one needs to accept the fact that children coming to schools have different literacy backgrounds. There are differences in their rate of development because there are differences in the ways literacy is organised in different cultures and literacy has different values and functions in daily life of people (Raban, 1997). However, such differences should not considered as a reason to blame them for their poor performance. If children come

from such a background where they have limited or no exposure to literacy, then it is the responsibility of the schools and stakeholders to create the opportunities to engage with literacy in meaningful ways. Franzen and Allington (1992) said that development should not be considered as something that limits what children can accomplish as learners. Rather, differences in how children develop their knowledge base (including reading and writing development) should be taken as an opportunity to personalise our instructions. A teacher should be enabled to extend and elaborate children's present knowledge about reading and writing.

To sum, in Indian context, the early literacy here does not have the same research rigour as we find in the western countries. Traditional ways like reading readiness perspective still continues to influence the reading pedagogy in one or the other way. Also, we, as teachers and curriculum framers, should acknowledge what children already know about literacy, make it a starting point and extend this knowledge in meaningful ways. There is only one way to learn about print and that is by interacting with print. Emergent literacy framework makes us believe that literacy learning cannot take place without having a constant availability of books and written material.

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