



**EQUIPPING MOTHERS TO INCULCATE LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION  
SKILLS AMONG CHILDREN**

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**ABSTRACT**

Language and communication are indispensable tools that help any individual to communicate and share thoughts, suggestions, ideas and emotions. Language is defined as a form of communication whether spoken, written or signed based on a system of symbols. In today's world parents don't give proper importance for inculcating language and communication skills. So, it was found imperative to study the level of awareness of the mothers on the importance of inculcating language and communication skills in children and also on the extent of their knowledge on the methods of imparting the same. Aim was to equip mothers with knowledge on how to inculcate knowledge and communication skills in children and to make them aware about the importance of imparting the same. Fifty mothers of children of 0-5 age group were selected purposively from the schools of rural area of ernakulam ie., Vypin. The tools used for the study were educational package, questionnaire, power point presentation, brochure and checklist. The study was conducted in 6 phases. It may be concluded that this package and power point presentation was really useful to the parents and the package can be elaborated by adding more activities.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language is defined as a form of communication whether spoken, written or signed based on a system of symbols. Children's capacity to learn language in the first four or five years is remarkable. Research highlights that there is a critical period for acquiring more than one language, that critical period is the first five years of life. During this time the brain is programmed to learn the language.

The process of learning language involves nonverbal communication, processing and understanding sounds. Even with the complexities of language, children's abilities to communicate and acquire language are remarkable. Children learn language through their interpersonal, social interactions with their care givers.

A child develops his/her first smile or social smile between 4-6 weeks after birth. Between 7-9 weeks first vocalisations of vowel like sounds occur. Vocalizes to caregivers smile and talk between 3-6 months. Babbling begins at 6 months it can even extend to 9 months for some children. Between 6-9 months the child also starts locating sounds. Between 9-11 months the baby babbles 2 syllables (da-da, ma-ma), understands and carries out simple commands.

Around a year of age the magical moment occurs when the child says his/her first word. The preverbal skills lay the foundation and now the child will start using real words. Between 12-15 months the child uses one or two common words meaningfully and understands key words in familiar situations. Babbles short sentences (Two word phrases) between 15-18 months and also points to familiar persons, animals or toys on request. The child starts using more than 50 words and understands more than 300 words. Between 18-24 months the child will be able to follow one step directions (eg: Get the ball), answers yes/no questions and often uses gestures (pointing, reaching).

From 2 years onwards child starts to string words together into sentences and speech intelligibility increases. Between 24-27 months the child will start using 3 word sentences (eg: I want juice). The child begins to follow simple two step directions/commands (eg: "Get your shoes and give them to dad"). The child will start to understand the difference between opposites (Big/small etc.). Between 27-30 months the child starts enjoying hearing stories about familiar people and experiences. The child begins to name objects upon request.

Between 30-33 months the child enjoys being read to from picture books and can name the use of an object. The child also starts answering simple 'WH' questions (eg: 'What is this?'). Before 36 months the child starts using about 200 or more words and points to body parts.

From 3 years onwards children develop better conversational skills. By 4 years children respond properly to questions, continue a conversation and ask question that lead to conversations (for eg: Why did he do that?). Their attention span increases to three minutes. Children start speaking about three hundred to thousand words. They will be able to sing songs, nursery rhymes and label many common objects. The child will be able to follow three step directions by the age of four.

Between four to five years a child will be able to answer more complicated "WH" questions (eg: Why is it raining?). The child starts using more complex sentences and starts to use verbs properly in the past tense. Child can talk about things, people and activities not currently happening. The child uses more correct grammar. Child starts to recognise letters and numbers, so when asked he may give his/her name, gender and possibly telephone number  
([www.everydayfamily.com](http://www.everydayfamily.com))

Most of the children follow the same pattern of development mentioned above but some children may get delayed or some milestones may not happen at all. This can be due to various reasons. One of the important factors is the changing lifestyle. The communication between children and parents in olden days was very strong compared to today. In good olden days majority of the families were joint families which had lots of family members. At those times children got opportunities to interact with lotsof people. It was also not a busy life unlike today's. Mothers had more time to spend with them as very few of them had jobs outside home.

The use of technology like television or other gadgets were less or were not there at all. Most of them spent their leisure time reading books or newspapers or listening to radio. In olden days family members used to come together to chit-chat with each other after their work. Children will also get involved in this. Good old stories were also told to children by their parents or grandparents.

In today's world there is a wide 'communication – gap' between parents and children which is more rampant among the nuclear families. The National Family and Parenting institute told 'Candis' magazine that it is becoming more common for families

to live great distances from one another (Debbie Attewell, 2004).

In today's world parents don't give proper importance for inculcating language and communication skills. So, It was found imperative to study the level of awareness of the mothers on the importance of inculcating language and communication skills in children and also on the extent of their knowledge on the methods of imparting the same.

Most of the parents are not aware about the current situation. They don't give proper importance for inculcating language and communication skills. Children need to be confident communicators in order to lead happy, fulfilled and successful lives. But in today's world statistics reveal a high incidence of children having communication difficulties and a lag in developing communication skills. Against this backdrop, it was found imperative to study the level of awareness of mothers on the importance of inculcating language and communication skills in children and also on the extent of their knowledge on the methods of imparting the same.

### **Aim**

To equip mothers with knowledge on how to inculcate language and communication skills in children and to make them aware about the importance of imparting the same.

### **General objectives**

- To prepare a package on methods to inculcate language and communication skills in children.
- To find out the awareness of mothers regarding the language and communication milestones and skills in children.
- To make mothers aware about the strategies and importance of inculcating language and communication skills in children.
- To evaluate the power point presentation.

### **Specific objectives**

To study the background information of mothers of children between 0-5 years.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive method of research was employed for the study. Fifty mothers having children between the ages of 1-5 years selected purposively from the St. Peters L.P school, Mallipuram and Holy angels Pre-school and day care in Mallipuram, these are schools in rural areas of Ernakulam district. These schools were selected because of

multitude and variety of residents, easy availability of respondents and the convenience of the investigator. Mothers having children between 0-5 age group was surveyed on awareness of language and communication skills in children(0-5years) using self-formulated questionnaire by the researcher. The other tools selected for the study include educational package, power point presentation, brochure and checklist.

**Package-** In the present study the package consisted of activities book which may be used as guide by mothers having children between 0-5 age group to inculcate language and communication skills in children. The package was done in English. The educational package is divided into 2 parts owing to its voluminous. The book gives a brief description about language and communication development in children. It explains about definitions of language and communication, language components, language development, bilingualism, strategies for language and communication development, the influence of technology on communication in children,

communication disorders, language disorder in detail, speech therapy, the role of parents in developing language and communication skills in children etc. The activities include both indoor and outdoor activities like eye contact activity, picture book, field trips, listening skills activities, flashcards, movement activities, sleep time activity, maze activity, skit etc.

**Questionnaire-**It was used mainly to study the awareness of mothers regarding the language and communication development in children. It was also used to study the background information of respondents and their children, awareness on the basic knowledge on language development, awareness on the language development milestones, strategies for language and communication development, awareness of role of parents in language and communication skills in children, awareness on technology and language development in children and language disorder. The questionnaire consists of 79 questions with 7 sub-headings.

**Visual aid-**In the present study the visual aid used was a PowerPoint presentation. The power point presentation had about 60 slides which explained about language and communication skills in children and the activities to inculcate language and communication skills in children for parents. The slides included definitions of language and communication, importance of communication, language components, language development, strategies for language and communication development, technology and communication, communication disorders which included speech disorder and language disorder, causes of language disorder, signs of a language disorder, effects of language disorder, speech therapy, activities to foster language and communication skills in children and finally the role of parents in developing communication skills in children

**Brochure-** In this study the brochure gave brief information about language and communication skills in children between 0-5 years. It explained briefly about language and communication development in children, importance of language and communication, causes of

language delay, signs of language delay, effects of language delay and role of parents in the language development of the child. It was prepared in Malayalam. It was a source of take away information for the respondents.

**Checklist-**In the present study the checklist was self- formulated by the investigator. It was prepared both in English and Malayalam. It was used by samples to critically evaluate the power point presentation developed by the investigator based on 10 aspects such as contents, title appropriateness, use of colours, use of pictures, style of presentation, ease of understanding the content, emphasis on important points, age appropriateness, purpose oriented and use of font styles and size.

The study was conducted in seven phases. They were development of the educational package, preparation of questionnaire, preparation of the visual aid, preparation of the brochure, administration of self-formulated questionnaire, conduct of the awareness programme and evaluation of the power point presentation

The survey results on the awareness of mothers regarding the language and communication skills in children (0-5 years)

using the questionnaire were consolidated and tables were prepared. Percentage analysis was used to interpret the data. The data gathered from the evaluation of the power point presentation using the checklist was consolidated and tables were prepared.

### **Awareness on Basic Knowledge on Language Development**

The level of awareness of the respondents about basic knowledge on language development is given below in Table 1.

## **RESULTS**

**Table 1 Basic knowledge on language development**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number (N=50)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
1.Language and communication	35	70
2.Importance of language development	34	68
3.Pattern of language development	12	24
4.Motivates child to speak	36	72
5.Meaning of verbal communication	37	74
6.Meaning of nonverbal communication	13	26
7.Importance of listening	39	78
8.Parents role in language development	33	66

The above table illustrates the awareness of mothers regarding the basic knowledge on language development. The results obtained indicates that majority of the respondents (78%) knew the importance of listening while talking. It shows that they gave due importance to the child's viewpoint while talking. More than half of them (50%) were aware about verbal communication, language and communication skills, importance of language development and parents role in language development. They also motivates

their child to speak.The above results show that only less than half of them (50%) were aware about nonverbal communication (26%) and pattern of language development (24%).

### **Awareness on Language Development Milestones**

#### **Birth-3 Months**

Respondent's awareness about language development milestones is given below in Table 2.

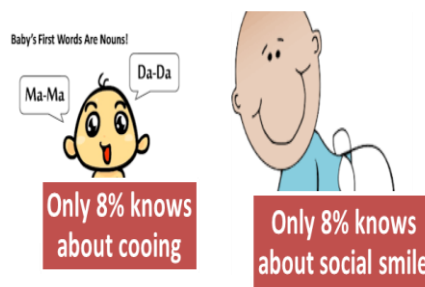
**Table 2 Language Development Milestones (Birth-3 Months)**

Category	Number (N=50)	Percentage (%)
1.Baby’s different cries	25	50
2.Cooing sounds	4	8
3.Social smile	4	8
4.Uses gestures to communicate	18	36
5.Gets calm to a familiar voice	21	42

Half of the respondents (50%) knew about the baby’s different cries. About 42 percent of them reported that babies get calm to a familiar voice. Thirty six percent (36%) of them knew that babies use gestures to communicate. Only eight percent of them were aware about cooing sounds and social smile. The above results indicate that only fifty percent of them were aware about the milestones of language development in birth-3 months. According to Spencer (2014), cooing at a newborn baby is not just a sign of affection - scientists think it is vital part of teaching them to speak. Exaggerated vowels that experts call ‘motherese’ - the ‘goos’ and ‘gaas’ that can be infuriating to non-parents - are a key part of the learning process, a new study suggests.

**4-6 Months**

Respondents awareness about language development milestones in 4-6 months is given below in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 Language development milestones (4-6months)**

The above figure 1 throws light on the awareness about the milestones of language development in 4-6 months. Fifty percent of them knew that the child makes sounds back when talked to. About 44 percent of them knew that children turn their eyes to a source of sound. Forty percent of them knew that babies respond to music or toy. Less than three fourth of them (14%) knew about babbling.

The results convey that even though about half of the respondents were aware about certain milestones like babies turning eyes toward the source of sound, making sounds when talked to and responds to music or toys.



But only 14 percent of them were aware about the basic and important milestone babbling.

**7-12 Months**

Respondents awareness about language development milestones is given below in Table 3.

**Table 3 Language development milestones (7-12 months)**

Category	Number (N=50)	Percentage (%)
1.Waves hi/bye	29	58
2.Responds to his/her name	29	58
3.Pays attention when spoken to	9	18
4.Responds to requests	8	16

From the above table it is clear that fifty eight percent of respondents were aware that children waves hi/bye and responds to his/her name. Eighteen percent (18%) of them knew that children pay attention when spoken to. But only sixteen percent (16%) of them knew that children respond to requests. The above result indicates that more than half of the selected respondents were aware that

children wave hi/bye and that they respond to their name when called. Only very few of them were aware that children pay attention when spoken to (18%) and only 16 percent of them knew that children responds to request.

**12-24 Months**

Respondents awareness about language development milestones in 12-24 months is given below in Table 4.

**Table 4 Language development milestones (12-24 months)**

Category	Number (N=50)	Percentage (%)
1.Child understands more than 300 words	15	30
2.Child points to body parts or pictures	12	24
3.Looks at the face when talked to	15	30
4.Child uses more than 50 words	10	20
5.2 word phrases	14	28
6.Follows 1 step directions	18	36
7.Responds to yes/no questions	14	28
8.Does gestures like pointing	28	56

When asked about the language development milestones in children between 12-24 months, majority of them (56%) were aware that children do gestures like pointing. About 30percent of them knew that child can understand more than 300 words and that they look into face when talked to. When asked about 2 word phrases and the response to Yes/No questions, twenty eight percent of them opined that children would know it. About 36 percent of them were aware that children can follow 1 step directions. The

above results convey that more than 56 percent knew that children can do gestures like pointing. It is seen that very few of them (20%) knew that the child can use more than 50 words.

This can develop a barrier to the beginning of reading or storytelling as they are less aware about the vocabulary capacity of the child.

**2-3 Years**

Respondents awareness about language development milestones in 2-3 years is given below in Table 5.

**Table 5 Language development milestones (2-3 years)**

Category	Number (N=50)	Percentage (%)
1.Combines 3 words	13	26
2.Understands opposites	13	26
3.Follows 2 step directions	11	22
4.Name objects on request	13	26
5.WH questions	6	12

The above table shows that 26 percent of them were aware that children can combine 3 words, understands opposites and can name objects when requested. Twenty two (22%) of them knew that children can follow 2 step directions. Twelve percent were aware about WH questions.

Even though 26 percent of them were aware about 3 milestones in this age category which

includes children combining 3 word phrases, understanding opposites and naming objects when requested. This is less than fifty percent only. It can be noted that only 12 percent are aware about WH questions which is a matter of concern.

Francis Bacon says “A prudent question is one half of wisdom”. How we ask questions is very important in establishing a basis for

effective communication. Effective questions open the door to knowledge and understanding. WH questions are used to request specific information. WH questions are used when the speaker is missing one piece of information. Therefore it is very important for effective communication (Brow,2014).

In the words of Sanders (2012),question answering is important to linguistic and

educational development. Understanding and answering questions are complex skills that involve the interaction of different language and cognitive skills.

**3-4 Years**

Respondents awareness about language development milestones in 3-4 years is given below in Table 6.

**Table 6 Language development milestones (3-4 years)**

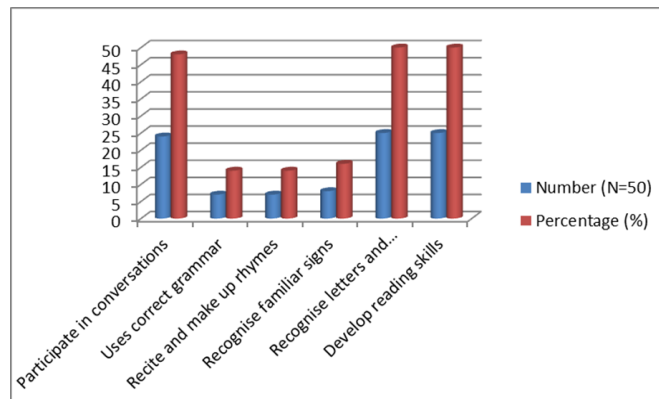
Category	Number (N=50)	Percentage (%)
1.Follows 3 step directions	11	22
2.Talks in short sentences	18	36
3.Hear and tell stories	13	26
4.Says his/her own and family members name	17	34

The above table shows that 22 percent of them knew that children can follow three step directions. Thirty six percent (36%) were aware that children can talk in short sentences. About 26 percent of them were aware that children can hear and tell stories. Thirty four percent knew that children can say his/her own and family members name. The results convey that only less than 50 percent of them were aware about the

language development milestones in this age. It can be seen that only 22 percent knew about three step directions which can lead to a decline in giving requests or commands to children which can have an impact on communication skills.

**4-5 Years**

Respondents awareness about language development milestones is given below in Figure 2.



**Figure 2 Language development milestones (4-5 years)**

The above figure shows that 48 percent agreed that children can participate in conversations. Fourteen percent of them agreed that children can use correct grammar and that they can recite and make up rhymes. About 16percent of them knew that children can recognise familiar signs. Half of the sample (50%) were aware that children can recognise letters and numbers and that they will develop reading skills.

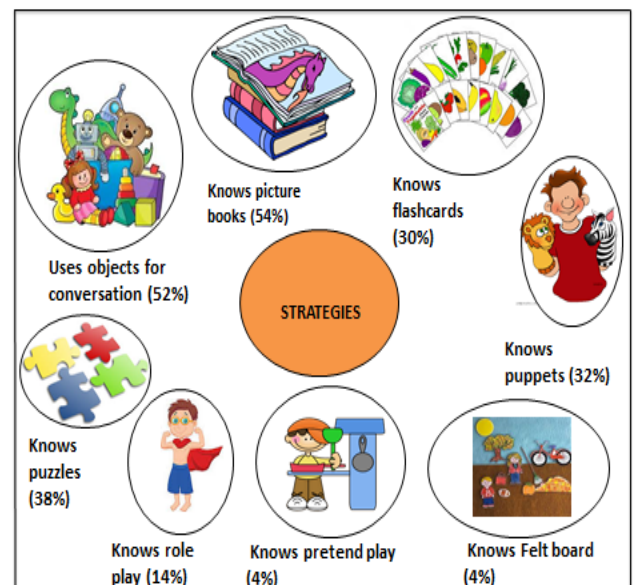
The results portray that very few of them (14%) were aware about children’s use of correct grammar and that they can recite and make up rhymes.

Four to five years is somewhat the final stage for language development. If children do not get proper motivation for communication, they will lag behind their peers in communication skills. Only by providing activities like rhymes and conversation in this age can develop communication skills. The awareness that children cannot use proper grammar and that they cannot recite or make

up rhymes at this age will reduce the chance of inculcating the same at the right time.

**Awareness on Strategies for Language and Communication Development**

Respondents awareness about strategies for language and communication development is given in Figure 3.



**Figure 3 Strategies for language and communication development**

The above figure shows that 52 percent of them used objects for starting conversations. In that 20 percent of them use toys as objects. Ten percent (10%) of them used books and mobile phones for starting conversation. Only 6 percent of them used television and newspaper for starting conversation.

About 54 percent were aware about picture books. Thirty eight percent of them were aware about puzzles. Thirty two (32%) of them knew about puppets and thirty percent (30%) of them knew about flashcards. About 14 percent of them knew what role play is. Four percent of them were aware about felt board and pretend play.

The results convey that more than fifty percent were aware about picture books (50%) and used objects for starting conversation (52%). But it should be noted that only four percent (4%) of them are aware about felt board and pretend play.

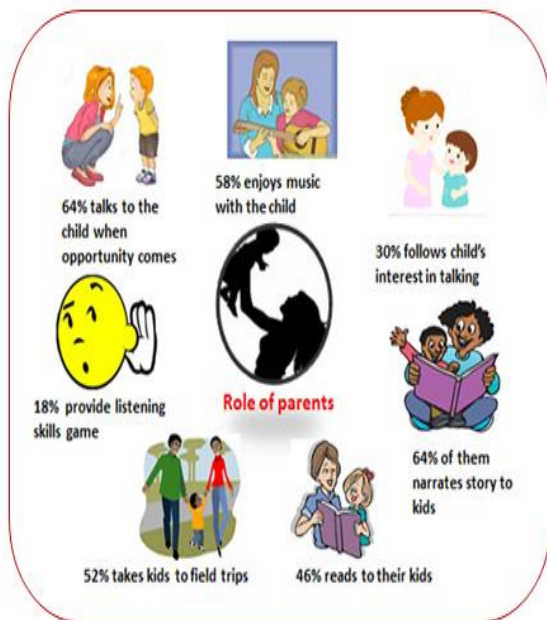
Pretend play is a useful and relevant strategy which helps in developing communication skills. According to Angeline (2013), children who pretend more also appear to tell more elaborate stories. Thus experimental and correlational studies had qualified results for the hypothesis that pretend play causes narrative development..

Sara (2016) stated that the home learning environment should include a variety of developmentally appropriate materials, including books, toys, and games, that support language growth. When working with little ones at home, start with shapes, colors, and letters. These are concepts that are easy to illustrate with concrete symbols and printed words.

Emilia (2011) states that usage of felt boards can improve speaking, listening, developing kids vocabulary, and calling upon reading skills. If they are retelling a familiar story, they are using their listening and memorization skills. Creating their own story involves thinking about cause and effect, problem solving, exploring relationships, manners, and cooperation.

### **Awareness on Role of Parents in Developing Language and Communication Skills in Children**

Respondents awareness about the role of parents in developing language and communication skills in children is given below in Figure 4.



**Figure 4**

### **Role of parents in developing language and communication skills in children**

From the above table it can be noted that more than fifty percent (64%) of them communicated to the child when they got an opportunity and indulged in storytelling. Among the 64 percent of them who indulged in storytelling, 34 percent of them used story books and thirty percent (30%) of them use children's magazines for storytelling.

When researchers have followed the development of young children, they have found that kids who spend more time talking with adults end up with larger vocabularies. Simply overhearing the speech of others doesn't do the trick (Shneidman and Meadow 2012).

About 58 percent of them enjoyed music with the child. Thirty percent (30%) of them followed child's interest in talking. Forty six percent (46%) of them read to their child. In that, when asked about the duration of reading 28 percent reported that they read only 30 minutes to child, 14 percent of them read for one hour to the child and only four percent of them read to child for two hours. Among the 46 percent 22 percent of them started reading to the child from 2 years on. Twenty percent of them started reading to the child from three years of age. Two percent (2%) of them began reading to the child from 1 and 4 years each.

Book reading has special power to have enduring impact on parents' patterns of interpersonal interaction with their children in a way that has lasting consequences for them. As parents read with children, they have the opportunity for frequent, sensitively tuned, language-rich interactions that draw children into conversations about books, the world, language and concepts. There is evidence that simply providing books has value, especially in settings where very few books are otherwise available, but evidence is much stronger that the combination of books and guidance for reading has great potential to result in and lead to more frequent and more effective reading and improvements in children's language and self-regulatory

competencies (Child Development Research Volume, 2012).

According to Sara (2016), shared book reading not only introduces children to print concepts but also exposes them to a varied vocabulary and expands their phonemic skills. While reading and at the end of the story, ask open-ended questions about the characters, objects, and events that are part of the book. Whether a child has access to an early education programme or speaks a different language besides English in the home, the quality of these parent-child engagements is the biggest predictor of how prepared students are to become fluent readers in school. Fifty two percent of them were aware about the importance of field trips. About 18 percent of them provided listening skills game to children.

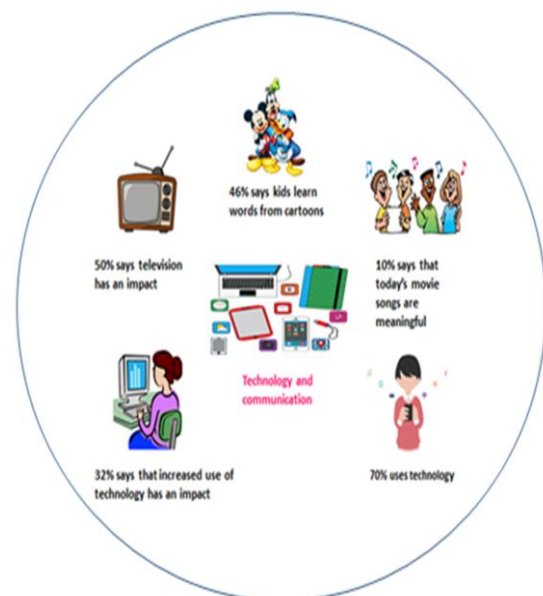
The results convey that more than half of the respondents (64%) of them communicated to the child when they got an opportunity and also indulged in storytelling. But only 30% of them followed their child's interest in talking. Only when children were asked about their interests they start communicating well. Listening skills is also very important in communication but only 18 percent of them gave such games for listening skills.

Dorine (2005) states that listening skills become extremely important when the child

enters a learning environment such as a preschool. They are equally important to their social development as they attend and participate in conversations. Listening to spoken language is an integral part of developing speech, language, and communication.

### **Awareness on Impact of Technology on Communication/Language Development**

Respondents awareness about impact of technology on communication/language development is given below in Figure 5.



**Figure 5**

### **Impact of Technology on Communication/Language Development**

The above figure shows that when asked about the impact of television in communication/language development fifty

percent (50%) of them opined that it had an impact. Forty six percent agreed that children learn words from cartoons and movies. Only 10percentof them felt that words used in today's movie songs have meaning.

Zimmerman (2005) states that infant exposure to television has been linked to delayed language development and kindergarten readiness skills. Crowley et al (2011) suggests that television is merely a medium for transmitting information. Surely it's the information that counts, not the medium itself. Indeed, experiments have shown that kids who watch age-appropriate educational programs, show immediate improvements in their abilities to recall information and to solve the sorts of problems modeled in the shows.

Rule and Auge (2005) observed that students enjoy learning almost any subject if presented through the use of cartoons. Nearly three fourth of them (70%) used technology like mobile phones, laptops etc. About 32 percent of them reported that increased usage of technology by parents had an impact on children.

Robinson(2002), suggests that emotional connectivity and language development are two areas where most psychologists have expressed concern. It is certainly possible that excessive use of smart phones and social media can negatively affect the social bond a parent has with their child. Although every child has different emotional needs, the distractive effect of such devices may lead some children to feel neglected and lose emotional connections to their parents. This may lead to emotional outbursts and social isolation-- potentially manifesting as depression or anxiety.

The above result shows that nearly three fourth of them (70%) use technology but only 32 percent of them were aware about the impact of technology on communication/language development in children.

#### **Awareness on Language Disorder**

Respondents awareness about language disorder is given below in Table 14.



**Table 14 Awareness on language disorder**

Category	Number (N=50)	Percentage (%)
1.Language disorder	29	58
2.Hereditary in language disorder	10	20
3.Language disorder affects social skills	30	60
4.Language disorder leads to academic struggles	25	50
5.Hearing problem as a cause of language disorder	17	34
6.Speech therapist	18	36
7.Importance of language skills activities at home	25	50
8.Identification of language disorders	7	14

The above table conveys that fifty eight percent (58%) of them knew what a language disorder is. About 20 percent of them felt that language disorder is hereditary. Cirrin (2008) found that twenty to forty percent of children with a family history of speech and language impairment have the condition themselves, compared with about four percent of those with no family history of SLI.

Sixty percent (60%) of them were aware that language disorder affects social skills in children. According to Vernes (2009) when kids can't communicate clearly, they may struggle to make friends and be part of a social group. They may prefer to be alone and become shy or distant. Fifty percent of them agree that language disorder can lead to academic struggles in children and knew about the importance of providing language skills activities at home.

During the early childhood years parents should sing and play lots of music. They should talk about whatever they see when they are driving in the car or at the supermarket. Listen to the child. Give the child plenty of time to respond, and resist the temptation to jump in and fill the silence. About thirty four percent of them agreed that hearing problem is a cause of language disorder. Children with hearing loss may not hear their own voices when they speak. They may speak too loudly or not loud enough. They may have a speaking pitch that is too high. They may sound like they are mumbling because of poor stress, poor inflection, or poor rate of speaking. Children with hearing loss comprehend and produce shorter and simpler sentences than children with normal hearing. Thirty six percent of them knew who a speech therapist was. Fourteen percent

(14%) of them knew how to identify language disorder in children.

The result furnished above shows that more than half of them (60%) were aware about the effects of language disorder in social skills and what a language disorder meant. But it is to be noted that only fourteen percent of them knew how to identify a language disorder. This is a serious matter concern as only when parents are aware how to identify language problem in children can be identified

## CONCLUSION

Language and communication skills are essential tools for the survival of human beings. It enables individuals to give expression to their feelings, ideas, and concerns. It is of great relevance to inculcate language and communication skills in children as in today's world communication

gap is so deep that it has started resulting in a sense of detachment in the relations. Learning to talk and converse with others always happens naturally for almost all children. But parents can support in building it especially mothers as children spend more time with them in their early years. The method of its inculcation is of great significance for its effectiveness. Activities provide an opportunity to learn by doing. Learning can be made fun rather than a stressful task. It is human nature to learn by experience, rather than when told or explained by someone else. Activities help to draw their attention, explore and express themselves and internalize what they have learned. Thus by helping children to kick start their language learning adventure we can develop effective communicators.

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