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## **Emergent Literacy Experiences in the Classroom - A Sample Survey in Mysore City**

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### **Abstract**

Most of the research on reading acquisition in India has been done with school-age children; hardly any literature is available on the development of emergent literacy in bilingual preschoolers. Children in India enter preschools with varying degrees of exposure to English and bring with them diverse literacy experiences. Preschools in India do not have a standard curriculum; they follow a customized curriculum which prepares children to start formal education. Hence, there is a need to evaluate the literacy experiences of preschoolers in the Indian scenario.

The present study reports the findings of two surveys that aimed at evaluating the emergent literacy experiences of Kannada-speaking children studying in preschools with English as the medium of instruction. A questionnaire on emergent literacy experiences in the classroom and a questionnaire on books were developed for the purpose of this survey. 28 teachers from 10 preschools in Mysore city participated in the survey.

Results of the study indicated that 83.32% of teachers reported that children in their school were exposed to literacy rich experiences through activities such as storybook reading, print Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) 428

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awareness, letter knowledge and phonological awareness. 77.56% of teachers in the sample reported that preschools provided good quality and child friendly books with appropriate text and illustrations. Demographic data reveals that 62.5% of teachers were qualified with a Bachelor's degree or more, 75% of teachers had undergone teachers' training and 66.67% of teachers had over 5 years of teaching experience.

This indicates that the preschools in the sample have employed well qualified teachers who provide children with a literacy rich environment in the classroom.

### **Key words**

Preschool, Bilingual, Teachers, Oral Language, Print Knowledge, Phonological Awareness

### **Introduction**

Traditional definitions of literacy refer to the mastery of written language forms (reading and writing), whereas “the concept of emergent literacy encompasses the developmental and interactional relationship between spoken and written language forms” (Goldsworthy, 2003). Emergent literacy describes the concepts, skills and knowledge that young children have about reading and writing prior to beginning their formal literacy instruction in elementary school (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). They show behaviours like pretending to read, scribbling, imitating rhymes and listening to stories, much before they enter school, which indicates the emergence of literacy. Young children's emergent literacy development is influenced by the presence of supports for literacy in the home environment (Zucker & Grant, 2007) and the school environment (Ezell & Justice, 2005).

Literacy-rich environments, both at home and at school, are important in promoting literacy and preventing reading difficulties. In literacy-rich home environments, adults provide children with occasions for daily reading, extended discourse, language play, experimentation with literacy materials, book talk (discussion of characters, action and plot) and dramatic play (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999; International Reading Association & National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998). In their joint position statement, Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children, the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998) confirm that the first eight years of a child's life are the most important years for literacy development and that developmentally appropriate practices at home and at school are crucial for ensuring that children become successful readers.

Some children, however, enter elementary school without a strong background in literacy. Studies conducted on native English speakers report that children who are at the risk of developing reading problems are those who begin school with low language skills, less phonemic awareness and letter knowledge, and less familiarity with literacy tasks and underlying purposes (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999). According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), non-English-speaking children need adequate preparation before they are taught to read in English. The

ability to speak in English provides a foundation for learning the alphabetic principles, the structure of the language, and the content of the material they are reading. If children cannot speak English they should be taught to read and write in their native language while becoming proficient in English. Formal reading instruction in English can be started after the child is adequately proficient in oral English (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

### **Emergent Literacy Scenario in India**

In a multilingual country such as India, children are exposed to more than one language in their environment. Majority of people in rural India send their children to schools with the native language as the medium of instruction. Due to the fast-paced development in the big cities, more and more people living in urban India prefer to send their children to schools with English as the medium of instruction. These children enter school without gaining sufficient oral proficiency in the English language. They begin learning ‘how to read and write English’ along with ‘how to understand and speak English’. In other words, oral proficiency in English develops along with literacy acquisition. Although this appears like a challenging task, Indian children have done it for decades. There is hardly any research data available that sheds light on how emergent literacy develops in these children.

### **The Focus of This Study**

The present study is part of a series of surveys that were conducted with the objective of studying the emergent literacy experiences of preschool children who were native speakers of Kannada (a Dravidian language spoken predominantly in the state of Karnataka, India) studying in schools with English as the medium of instruction. Three surveys were conducted as part of the first author’s doctoral research that attempts to study the development of emergent literacy in English language learners. The present report is based on the findings of two surveys, which assessed the emergent literacy experiences of preschool children in the classroom and the quality of books available to them. The third survey titled ‘Emergent Literacy Experiences at Home- A Sample Survey in Mysore’ (Khurana & Rao, 2008) is available in Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com). In the absence of standardized questionnaires (in India) for the assessment of emergent literacy experiences, the investigator developed questionnaires for the same.

### **Research on Emergent Literacy Experiences**

Development of literacy is a long and complicated process where the environment plays an important role. A child’s literacy depends upon the bigger environment (country) and the immediate environment (home and community). The practices and beliefs of people in these environments have an impact on the child’s literacy development. Research indicates that these experiences form a basis for a child’s success in reading and writing. Several studies have documented a positive relationship between children’s literacy experiences at home and the ease with which children transition to school (Copeland & Edwards, 1990; Mason & Allen, 1996; van Kleeck, 1990).

Children's parents, caregivers and early childhood educators play an important role in ensuring that children successfully progress in their literacy development. Children's literacy efforts are best supported by adults' interactions with children through reading aloud and conversation and by children's social interactions with each other (McGee & Richgels, 1996). Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) state, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. This is especially so during the preschool years". Young children's emergent literacy experiences are facilitated when adults provide opportunities for them to discuss the stories that they hear (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 1999). Reading aloud to children facilitates development in four areas that are important to formal reading instruction: oral language, cognitive skills, concept about print and phonemic awareness (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; Hall & Moats, 1999; Holdaway, 1979).

In preschools, children are exposed to literacy rich experiences, which facilitate their physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. Preschools use nursery rhymes, drawing, colouring, storytelling and story reading as part of the curriculum. An important factor in the literacy experiences of young children is the quality and types of books available to them (Burns, Griffin & Snow, 1999). Ezell and Justice (2005) suggest that three features should be considered when selecting books for preschool children: the narrative content, the print features and the physical characteristics. For a literacy rich classroom, preschools should have high quality literacy materials, a physical arrangement that encourages reading and writing, the use of assessment to guide instruction, use of a variety of instructional methods, presence of high quality verbal input and high levels of adult responsiveness (Wiggins, Marshall & Friel, 2007).

### **Areas of Concern**

When children enter preschool, some areas of concern for their literacy experiences are the extent of literacy activities carried out in the classroom, the quality and types of books available to them and the teachers' educational qualification and experience. This paper attempts to explore these key areas in the preschools of the city of Mysore. According to Abt-Perkins and Rosen (2000), "Research on culturally relevant and responsible instruction clearly shows that knowledge of students' family, community and socio-ethnic cultures, their languages, literacy practices, and values can help teachers address the interests and build on the skills of their students". Barnett (2004) found that child development outcomes are higher when teachers have a bachelor's degree. This shows that well qualified teachers who are sensitive to the socio-economic and linguistic background of children, following healthy literacy practices, result in higher child development outcomes.

### **Research on Emergent Literacy Skills**

Growing body of research evidence highlights the significance of preschool period for the development of critically important emergent literacy skills such as oral language, print knowledge and phonological processing (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998) Research indicates that shared storybook reading is an effective

way of improving the child's oral language and creating print awareness (Morrow, 1990; Teale & Sulzby, 1987).

Storybook reading is more effective if it is carried out in an interactive manner, where parents read with feelings and expressions, ask questions, and encourage children to retell stories or complete sentences for them (Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan et al., 1988). Vocabulary skills are essential for the development of reading comprehension and research indicates that early vocabulary delays are one manifestation of risk for later reading disabilities (Scarborough, 1990). Therefore, it is important for preschool teachers to include oral language activities such as storybook reading in classrooms.

Print knowledge describes children's early discoveries about the orthography of a language. Orthography is a method of representing the sounds of a language by written or printed symbols. Letter knowledge, which provides the basis for forming connections between the letters in spellings and the sounds in pronunciations, has been identified as a strong predictor of reading success (Badian, 1995; Ehri & Sweet, 1991). Hence, letter knowledge forms an essential part of the preschool curriculum.

Phonological awareness is an essential skill for learning to read (Torgesen, Wagner & Rashotte, 1994). Phonological awareness refers to the ability to analyze the sound structure of spoken language. It requires non-lexical processing; that is, one has to look beyond the meaning of a word to focus on the sound structure of a word. It includes awareness of not only the individual phonemes but also several other larger sound units, including syllables and words. When children begin reading, they need to be able to decode words. In decoding, children retrieve the sounds represented by the letters and then blend these sounds to create the words. Research shows that children who come to formal instruction with underdeveloped phonological awareness face great challenges keeping up with early reading instruction (Torgesen, Wagner & Rashotte, 1994). Thus, it is important for preschool teachers to include activities that facilitate phonological awareness in children.

### **Research on Emergent Literacy in Bilingual Children**

Although research has been undertaken on emergent literacy in many languages, most of these studies have focussed on monolingual children (Clay, 1975; Dyson, 1983; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Goodman, 1990; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Taylor, 1983; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Tolchinsky, 2003; Vernon & Ferreiro, 1999).

There is a paucity of research on literacy development among young bilingual children. A few studies that were conducted on bilingual children pointed in particular to the complex connections bilingual children need to make between their home and school knowledge (Kenner, Kress, Hayat, Kam, & Tsai, 2004; Reese, Garnier, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 2000; Romero, 1983; Schwarzer, 2001; Tabors, Paez & Lopez, 2002). Tabors et al. (2002) suggested that young Spanish-dominant bilingual children developed a variety of abilities in their two languages

across tasks (e.g. narrative production task, book task) in cooperation with their primary caregivers.

### **Transferability of Skills in Bilingual Children**

Researchers have studied bilingual children's language and early literacy skills and are divided in their opinion about the transferability of these skills from one language to another. Some believe that pre-literacy skills, such as concepts of print, alphabetic principle (if each language is alphabetic), rhyming, syntactic knowledge and extended discourse abilities are transferable from one language to another (e.g., Nagy, McClure, & Mir, 1997). Others believe that only some of these skills are transferable and this transfer depends upon the languages in question.

Tabors, Lesaux, and Paez (2005), studied oral language and early literacy skills in Spanish and English bilinguals and monolinguals, from pre-kindergarten to second grade. They conclude that phonological awareness and early literacy skills, as indexed by letter-word identification and dictation, are amenable to instruction, and appear to be transferable no matter which of these two, closely related, languages they are learned in. **But**, picture vocabulary was found to be the most stable of the language and literacy assessments across time, while it demonstrated the least transferability.

Some studies have found that for English language learners, phonological awareness in the native language (L1) predicts successful literacy acquisition in both L1 and a second language (L2) (August & Hakuta, 1997; Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993; Gottardo, 2002; Quiroga, Lemos-Britton, Mostafapour, Abbott, & Berninger, 2001). In other words, phonological awareness skills developed in L1 transfer to L2 and facilitate L2 literacy development. But this is not true in all cases, for example, in a comparison of Spanish-English bilinguals and Chinese-English bilinguals on the phonological test, Bialystok, Majumdar, & Martin (2003), found no benefits in English phonological awareness skills of children who spoke Chinese at home; although some advantages were found for children whose first language was Spanish. The reason for these differences may reside in either the degree of similarity in the sound systems of the two languages, the use of an alphabetic writing system that places a premium on individual phonemes, or both.

### **Metalinguistic Development**

The influence of bilingualism on metalinguistic development has received mixed support. Some studies have noted that learning a second language promotes word awareness (Oren, 1981). On the other hand no differences in lexical awareness between bilinguals and monolinguals have also been reported (Rosenblum & Pinkers, 1983). A few studies have addressed the association between phonological awareness and bilingualism. One study reported that English-French bilinguals had higher phonological awareness skills than their monolingual English-speaking peers (Rubin & Turner, 1989).

Hence the review of literature on bilingual studies indicates that bilingualism per se does not cause any encumbrance to literacy development and some studies even indicate that bilingualism facilitates the development of metalinguistic skills. Bilingual studies also show that phonological awareness and early literacy skills transfer from one language to another and facilitate literacy development. Most of the studies reviewed here have been conducted with bilingual participants who speak their native language at home and are living in predominantly English-speaking environments. The participants from these studies form a linguistic-minority in native English-speaking societies and need special intervention when they enter schools.

In the present study, the bilingual participants form a linguistic majority because the native language, Kannada is spoken predominantly in the environment. These children acquire English literacy when they enter schools with English as the medium of instruction. They do not require special interventions since the majority of children in the classroom are from similar linguistic background and the teachers use the same teaching strategy for all. Since no previous literature is available in the Indian context, it would be interesting to examine the literacy environment of children in the classroom situation.

### **Research on Emergent Literacy in India**

Most of the research done in India in the field of reading has been done on school-age children. Very few studies have explored the development of emergent literacy in preschoolers. Khurana and Rao (2008) conducted a survey on the emergent literacy experiences of preschool children (in the age range of 3- to 6-years) in the home environment. 140 parents from 10 preschools in Mysore city participated in this study. Results indicated that parents in the sample provided rich emergent literacy experiences through activities such as storybook reading and story-telling. Since the native language of majority of children in the study was Kannada, parents used Kannada for oral language activities like conversation and storytelling, and English for reading storybooks and other reading and writing activities.

One of the studies that support the developmental trend of logographic reading skills in preschoolers was conducted by Jagadish (1991). Native Kannada-speaking preschool children in the age range of 2-years to 5.6-years were shown pictures of familiar television advertisements and their responses were recorded. The results indicated the presence of logographic reading skills in preschool children, which showed a clear developmental trend. In another study, Swaroopa (2001) developed a checklist to identify children with language based reading difficulties. Participants were native Malayalam-speakers in the age range of 3- to 5-years. Rhyming, alliteration, rapid-naming, language expression, listening skills and non-verbal imitation were identified as potential variables to identify language based reading difficulties. Results also indicate that rhyming and alliteration were highly correlated and showed a clear developmental trend.

Pragna (1992) conducted a study on Gujarati-speaking children from Upper Kindergarten through grade two studying in schools with Gujarati and English as the medium of instruction. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in speech and the segmentation

ability of children exposed to alphabetic (English) and children exposed to non-alphabetic script (Gujarati). The results of this study also indicated that word reading and speech segmentation skills were highly co-related for children with English as the medium of instruction. Children with Gujarati as the medium of instruction showed low to moderate correlation or in some instances negative correlation to word reading and speech segmentation skills.

Research on acquisition of languages with alphabetic script such as English has indicated that the reading proficiency of children is significantly dependent on the phonological awareness abilities of these children. The studies conducted in India have demonstrated that phonemic awareness is not so crucial in learning to read Indian languages like Kannada, Hindi and Oriya (Karanth & Prakash, 1996; Prakash, 1987; 1994; 1999; Prakash, Rekha, Nigam, & Karanth, 1993; Prema, 1998). The results of these studies can be justified by the fact that Indian languages are semi-syllabic in nature and are fairly transparent, unlike their alphabetic counterparts, which depend largely on the acquisition of phonological awareness for successful reading abilities.

Malini (1996) demonstrated that the phonemic awareness ability developed by children is an artefact of the alphabetic script. She examined the unique situation of congenitally blind children learning to read Kannada through Bharathi Braille, which follows alphabetic principles. The performance of these children on phonological awareness tasks including phonemic awareness tasks was superior to that of the control group of normal children. In fact, the performance of blind children was equivalent to the performance described in studies of native English-speakers. This supports the fact that phonemic awareness is crucial in alphabetic literacy because it is an important component of the alphabetic principal.

Sankaranarayanan (2003) compared Indian children learning English as a second language with native English-speaking children studying in Boston (Sankaranarayanan & Kagan (in press) on skills such as letter identification, word recognition, reading text, rhyming, elision, RAN, rapid alternating stimulus, STM for digits and vocabulary. The Indian children had a mean age of 7 years and the Boston children had a mean age of 7.3 years. The profiles of Indian children were generally similar to those of the American children. The best predictors of reading ability for the Indian sample were speed of naming letters, vocabulary and phonological awareness. The low scores of Indian children on Vocabulary could be attributed to the fact that English was their second language. Performance on the elision test was the best predictor of reading ability in the American sample. Further, good and moderate Indian readers were faster than their American counterparts in naming speed tasks.

The cognitive profiles of the poor readers in the two countries revealed that poor readers did not have a general cognitive deficit, but faced difficulties in skills related to reading. The fact that monolingual and bilingual children learning to read English had similar profiles indicated that bilingualism per se is not a risk factor for learning to read, however, bilingual children may experience more difficulties in some aspects of phonological awareness in their non-native language. The data also highlighted the importance of print exposure and literacy training. The fact that working class children obtained lower reading scores than middle class children confirmed the importance of environmental factors in learning to read.



It is evident that the emergent literacy research in India is in the infancy stage. Hence, in order to develop questionnaires for the assessment of the literacy experiences of preschoolers, the investigator relied mainly on the Western literature, which suggests that children who are exposed to literacy-rich environments develop emergent literacy skills such as oral language, print knowledge and phonological awareness. These literacy skills in turn facilitate reading acquisition which leads to better academic performance.

### **Need for the Survey**

Literacy development is a complex process, which is dependent on the environment and the literacy experiences of children. In order to study the development of emergent literacy it is essential to study the literacy environment of preschool children. Classroom literacy experiences facilitate skills like oral language, print awareness and phonological awareness, which in turn facilitate the development of word recognition and reading comprehension. Research shows that children who come from literacy rich environments develop better reading skills and children who are successful readers perform well in school.

Most of the research in the field of emergent literacy has been done in the West on monolingual English speakers. The results of these studies may not be applicable to children from other language backgrounds. Research on bilingual children has mainly been carried out on English-Spanish bilinguals. There is a paucity of studies dealing with the development of emergent literacy in the bilingual/multilingual children in the Indian scenario. Hence, the present survey evaluates the emergent literacy environment of Kannada speaking children studying in preschools with English as the medium of instruction.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objective of the present research was to study the emergent literacy experiences of Kannada-speaking children studying in preschools with English as the medium of instruction in Mysore, Karnataka.

### **Method**

In order to study the emergent literacy experiences of children in their preschool environment, two questionnaires were developed:

1. Questionnaire for Teachers (QT) investigated the emergent literacy experiences of preschool children in the classroom.
2. Questionnaire on Books (QB) investigated the quality and type of books available for preschool children.

### **Development of Questionnaires**

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Based on the review of literature, questionnaires were designed to include the essential experiences required for the adequate development of emergent literacy skills in preschool children. The Questionnaires were designed in simple English with examples, wherever necessary. Majority of questions were framed to elicit a Yes/No response, such as “Do you read storybooks to your child?” Some questions required a response in terms of approximate percentages, for example, “Specify the approximate percentage of time you use English/Kannada (native language) with your students” (Refer to appendix for more details).

Three speech language pathologists, four special educators and three preschool teachers rated the questionnaire on content, comprehensibility and format. The suggestions received stated that the questionnaires should include details like number of children in each class, availability and use of non-toxic literacy materials in schools, pre-writing abilities and book handling skills of children. They also suggested the use of simple explicit language, which is easily understood by the preschool teachers. The questionnaires were revised based on the comments and suggestions. The details of the revised questionnaires are given below:

### **Questionnaire for Teachers (QT)**

The initial part of the questionnaire consisted of questions on demographic data such as, Name, Age, Sex, Educational Qualification and Number of years of teaching experience (see appendix for details). The latter part of the questionnaire consisted of 28 questions grouped under the following emergent literacy experiences. Each category consisted of 4 questions except 5 (a,b) and 5 (c,d) which comprised of 2 questions each. (See Appendix A for details)

- 1) Book handling skills (BHS) - includes four questions on whether the child is aware that a book has a front and back cover, a book is held right side up, pages are turned one at a time and a book is read from left to right.
- 2) Storybook Reading (SR) - includes four questions on whether the teacher reads storybooks, encourages the child to retell the story in his/her own words, sends home books that children can read themselves and that parents can read to the child.
- 3) Letter Knowledge (LK) - includes four questions on whether the teacher explains the difference between letter names and letter sounds, encourages children to match letter names and sounds, write letters of the alphabet and write small words like their names.
- 4) Phonological Awareness (Ph.A) - includes four questions on whether the teacher creates an awareness of rhymes, syllables and phonemes by teaching that words can be broken down into sound parts (syllables) or sounds (phonemes) and some words have the same beginning or ending sounds.
- 5) Print Awareness (PA) and Oral Language (OL) - includes two questions on print awareness and two questions on oral language skills.
  - i. (a, b) Print Awareness- includes two questions on whether children are encouraged to identify important signs like TOILET, STOP etc.
  - ii. (c, d) Oral Language- includes two questions on whether children are encouraged to talk in complete sentences and talk about their everyday experiences.

- 6) Reading Skills (RS) - includes four questions on whether the teacher encourages children to read using letter names or letter sounds, points at words while reading and match spoken word to the written word.
- 7) Language Use (LU) - includes four questions about the approximate percentage of time teachers use English or Kannada (native language) with children for daily conversation, storytelling, reading storybooks, and other reading/writing activities.

### **Questionnaire on Books (QB)**

The initial part of the questionnaire consisted of questions on demographic data such as, Name, Age, Sex, Address and Designation. The latter part of the questionnaire consisted of 25 questions grouped under the following categories. Each category consisted of 5 questions (See Appendix B for details).

- 1) Genres of Books (GB) - includes five questions on whether the children are exposed to storybooks which describe a fantasy or storybooks about familiar experiences, books for teaching concepts like alphabet, numbers, colours, shapes and informational books such as types of fruits, vegetables and transportation.
- 2) Child-Friendly Books (CFB) - includes five questions on whether the books are attractive, easy to handle, laminated, durable and free of hazards like sharp edges and toxic printing material.
- 3) Quality of Books (QB) - includes five questions on whether the books are graded according to the theme, size of print, vocabulary, amount of text and complexity of text.
- 4) Quality of Illustrations (QI) - includes five questions on whether the illustrations are colourful and attractive, descriptive of text, incorporate text in the form of speech bubbles or labels, and appropriate to socio-cultural aspects.
- 5) Type of Books (TB) - includes five questions on whether the children are exposed to board books, cloth books, touch and feel books, interactive books and electronic books (CD-ROM).

### **Procedure**

The surveys were conducted using a structured questionnaire method. A total of 56 questionnaires were distributed to a total of 28 teachers from 10 preschools in Mysore city. Schools with English as the medium of instruction, catering to the needs of Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-KG), Lower Kindergarten (LKG) and Upper Kindergarten (UKG) children were selected on a random basis for the study. All the teachers were asked to respond to both the questionnaires (QB and QT). They were instructed to read the questions carefully and answer appropriately. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the investigator during her personal visit.

From a total of 56 questionnaires, 47 (83.92%) completed questionnaires were received back and 9 (16.08%) questionnaires were not completed, as some teachers did not respond. Table 1 provides the percentage of teachers who responded to QT and QB.

[Insert Table 1 near here]

## Scoring

Teachers' responses on the questionnaires were scored. Responses were scored 'one' or 'zero' based on the nature of response. For example, for the question, "Does your organization have books for teaching rhymes?" if the response was 'Yes' the question received 'one' point and if the response was 'No' the question received 'zero'. Uniform scoring pattern was followed for both QT and QB. The maximum score for each questionnaire is as follows:

- 1) QT: Maximum score =28
- 2) QB: Maximum score =25

The last question in QT probes the teachers' use of language (English and Kannada) with their students. It states "Specify the approximate percentage of time you use English/Kannada (native language) with your students?" Since the children in the present sample were enrolled in schools with English as the medium of instruction, a response received a score of 'one' if teachers used English 50% of the time (or more) in the classroom. A response scored 'zero' if the teachers used English less than 50% of the time in the classroom.

## Results

Results of the survey have been summarized separately for 'Questionnaire for Teachers' and 'Questionnaire on Books'. The demographic factors and the emergent literacy factors were studied individually for each questionnaire. The questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version-16 software.

### Section I: Questionnaire for Teachers

The questionnaire for teachers investigated the emergent literacy experiences of preschool children in the classroom. A total of 83.92% of teachers responded to the questionnaires.

Table 1: Percentage of teachers who responded to the questionnaires

Type of Questionnaire	No. of Questionnaires distributed	No. of Teachers who responded	Percentage of Teachers who responded
QT	28	24	85.71%
QB	28	23	82.14%
Total	56	47	83.92%

#### a) Demographic Factors

The demographic data from the questionnaire revealed that 75% of teachers had undergone teacher training programs while 25% were not trained in teaching. Teachers' responses indicate that the children in Pre Kindergarten, Lower Kindergarten and Upper Kindergarten range from

2.6 to 6 years of age and the number of children in each class varied from one school to another, ranging from 12 to 50 children per class.

Teaching experience of preschool teachers ranged from 1 to 20 years (Refer Figure 1). Responses revealed that 33.33% teachers had around 5 years of experience, 33.33% teachers had 6-10 years experience, 25% teachers had 11-15 years experience and 8.34% teachers had around 20 years of experience. Hence it is evident that majority of teachers (66.67%) had more than 5 years of teaching experience.

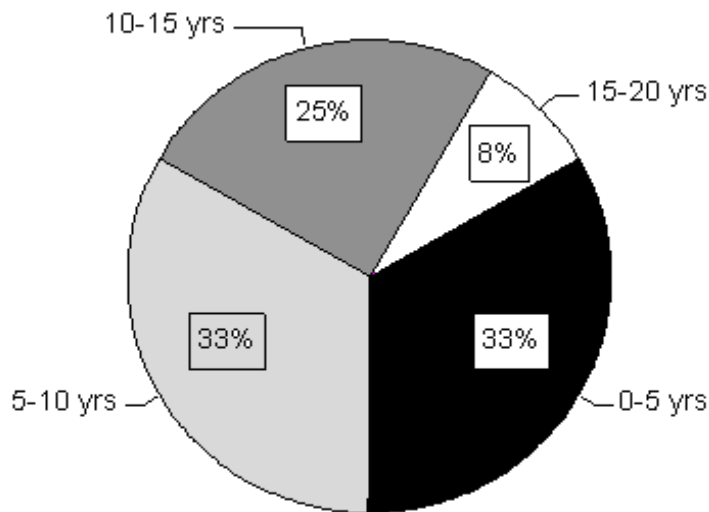


Figure 1: Teaching Experience of Preschool teachers

The educational background of preschool teachers in the sample revealed that 28% of teachers were undergraduates (education below Bachelor's degree), 50% of teachers were graduates (Bachelor's degree), 12.5% of teachers were post-graduates (Master's degree) and information was not available for 8.33% of teachers (Refer Figure 2). This indicates that 62.5% of teachers in the sample had a degree greater than or equal to a Bachelor's degree.

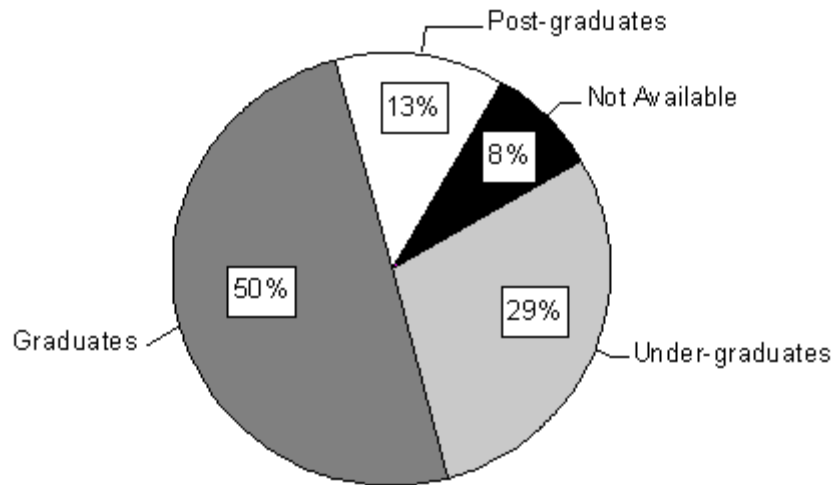


Figure 2: Educational background of Preschool Teachers

Table 2: Descriptive statistics: Questionnaire for Teachers (N=24)

Emergent Literacy Experiences in Class	Mean	Range		Standard Deviation
		Minimum	Maximum	
1. Book Handling Skills (BHS)	3.42	1	4	0.78
2. Storybook Reading (SR)	2.92	1	4	0.97
3. Letter Knowledge (LK)	3.13	0	4	1.26
4. Phonological Knowledge (PK)	3.29	0	4	1.00
5.a. Environmental Print (EP)	1.71	0	2	0.62
5.b. Oral Language (OL)	1.96	1	2	0.20
6. Reading Skills (RS)	3.12	0	4	1.23
7. Language Use (LU)	3.79	2	4	0.51
Total Score	23.33	9	28	4.35

#### b) Emergent Literacy Related Factors

Besides the demographic data, the teachers' questionnaire consisted of 28 questions which elicited responses regarding the quality of the literacy experiences in the classrooms. From a

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total of 28 teachers, 24 (85.71%) teachers responded while 4 (14.29%) teachers did not respond to the questionnaire.

The data from the Questionnaire for Teachers was subjected to descriptive statistics (Refer Table 2) which shows that the means for all the emergent literacy experiences in classroom such as Book Handling Skills (BHS), Letter Knowledge (LK), Phonological Awareness (Ph.A), Print Awareness (PA), Oral Language (OL), Reading Skills (RS) and Language Use (LU) were greater than 3 (75%), except storybook reading, which is 2.9 {73% } Also, mean for the total score was 23.33 (83.32%) which indicates that the children in the sample were exposed to rich emergent literacy experiences in the classroom.

For further analysis, the total score received by teachers on the questionnaire (maximum score = 28) was grouped into four levels: 0-6 (0-24%), 7-13 (25-49%), 14-20 (50-74%), 21-28 (75-100%). Since the total numbers of questions were 7 and the maximum score was 28, the scores were divided into four equal levels. Responses from 24 teachers indicate that 79.17% of teachers scored 21-28 (75-100%), 16.67% of teachers scored 14-20 (50-74%), and 4.16% of teachers scored 7-13 (25-49%), while none of the teachers scored below 25% (Refer Table 3). Considering scores greater than 75% as good scores, it is evident that 79.17% of teachers in the sample received good scores.

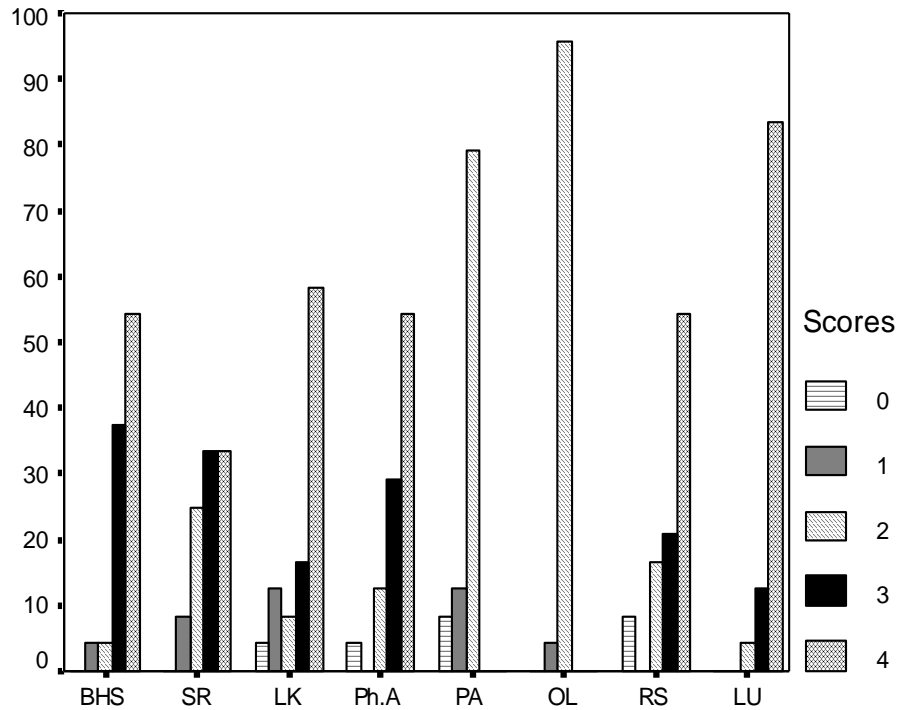
Table 3: Teachers' scores on Questionnaire for Teachers

Teachers' Scores	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
Teachers who scored 75-100%	19	79.17%
Teachers who scored 50-74%	4	16.67%
Teachers who scored 25-49%	1	4.16%
Teachers who scored 0-24%	0	0%
Total	24	100%

The Questionnaire for Teachers consisted of questions that were grouped under seven categories: 1- Book Handling Skills (BHS), 2- Storybook Reading (SR), 3- Letter Knowledge (LK), 4- Phonological Awareness (Ph.A), and 5(a, b)- Print Awareness (PA), 5(c, d)- Oral Language (OL), 6- Reading Skills (RS) and 7- Language Use (LU). Each category had 4 questions except Print Awareness and Oral Language, which had 2 questions each. Each question scored '0' or '1' based on the responses. Thus, each category received a score from 0 to 4 except Print Awareness and Oral Language, which scored '0' to '2'.

Figure 3 illustrates the teachers' scores (from '0' to '4') on each of the eight categories of 'emergent literacy experiences in the classroom' on the X-axis. Y-axis shows the percentage of teachers who scored from 0 to 4 on each category. For example, 54.2% of teachers received a maximum score of '4' (100% score) in response to the questions on 'BHS- Book Handling Skills', 37.5% of teachers received a score of '3' (75% score), 4.2% of teachers received a score of '2' (50% score) and 4.2% of teachers received a score of '1' (25% score).

[Insert Figure 3 near here]



Emergent Literacy Experiences in the Class Room

Figure 3: Emergent Literacy Experiences in the Classroom

BHS- Book Handling Skills, SR- Storybook Reading, LK- Letter Knowledge, Ph.A- Phonological Awareness, PA- Print Awareness, OL- Oral Language, RS- Reading Skills, LU- Language Use

Note: PA and OL consisted of two questions each so the maximum score is 2 each.

### Emergent Literacy Experiences in the Classroom

Table 4 depicts the number (and percentage) of teachers who scored from ‘0’ to ‘4’, on the seven categories of emergent literacy experiences in the classroom. Except Print awareness and Oral Language (which have scores from ‘0’ to ‘2’), all categories have teachers’ scores from ‘0’ to ‘4’.

Table 4: Emergent literacy experiences in the classroom

Score	Number (Percentage) of Teachers
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	BHS	SR	LK	Ph.A	PA	OL	RS	LU
0 (0%)	0	0	1 (4.2%)	1 (4.2%)	2 (8.3%)	0	2 (8.3%)	0
1 (25%)	1 (4.2%)	2 (8.3%)	3 (12.5%)	0	3 (12.5%)	1 (4.2%)	0	0
2 (50%)	1 (4.2%)	6 (25%)	2 (8.3%)	3 (12.5%)	19 (79.2%)	23 (95.8%)	4 (16.7%)	1 (4.2%)
3 (75%)	9 (37.5%)	8 (33.3%)	4 (16.7%)	7 (29.2%)	-	-	5 (20.8%)	3 (12.5%)
4 (100%)	13 (54.2%)	8 (33.3%)	14 (58.3%)	13 (54.2%)	-	-	13 (54.2%)	20 (83.3%)
Total	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	24 (100%)

BHS- Book Handling Skills, SR- Storybook Reading, LK- Letter Knowledge, Ph.A- Phonological Awareness, PA- Print Awareness, OL- Oral Language, RS- Reading Skills, LU- Language Use

### 1. Book Handling Skills (BHS)

Results indicate that 54.2% of responses received a score of '4' (100% score), 37.5% of responses received a score of '3' (75% score), 4.2% responses received a score of '2' (50% score) and 4.2% responses received a score of '1' (25% score). Thus, 91.7% of teachers received a score greater than 75%.

### 2. Storybook Reading (SR)

Results indicate that 33.3% of responses received a score of '4' (100% score), 33.3% of responses received a score of '3' (75% score), 25% responses received a score of '2' (50% score) and 8.3% responses received a score of '1' (25% score). Although, 66.6% of teachers received a score greater than 75%, further analysis was carried out to find out why only 33.3% teachers scored 100%. Detailed analysis indicated that 95.83% of teachers read storybooks and encouraged children to retell stories in their own words. 62.5% of teachers sent home books (from the library) that parents could read aloud to children, while only 33.3% of teachers sent home books that preschool children could read on their own.

### 3. Letter Knowledge (LK)

Results indicate that 58.3% of responses received a score of '4' (100% score), 16.7% of responses received a score of '3' (75% score), 8.3% responses received a score of '2' (50% score) and 12.5% responses received a score of '1' (25% score). Thus, 75% of teachers received a score greater than 75%. Phonological Awareness (Ph.A)

Results indicate that 54.2% of responses received a score of '4' (100% score), 29.2% of responses received a score of '3' (75% score), 12.5% responses received a score of '2' (50% score) and 12.2% responses received a score of '0' (0% score). Thus, 83.4% of teachers received a score greater than 75%.

### 4. Print Awareness (PA)

Results indicate that 79.2% of responses received a score of '2' (100% score), 12.5% of responses received a score of '1' (50% score) and 8.3% responses received a score of '0' (0% score).

### 5. Oral Language (OL)

Results indicate that 95.8% of responses received a score of '2' (100% score) and 4.2% of responses received a score of '1' (50% score).

### 6. Reading Skills (RS)

Results indicate that 54.2% of responses received a score of '4' (100% score), 20.8% of responses received a score of '3' (75% score), 16.7% responses received a score of '2' (50% score) and 8.3% responses received a score of '0' (0% score). Thus, 75% of teachers received a score greater than 75%.

### 7. Language Use (LU)

Results indicate that 83.3% of responses received a score of '4' (100% score), 12.5% of responses received a score of '3' (75% score) and 4.2% responses received a score of '2' (50% score). Thus, 95.8% of teachers received a score greater than 75%. This indicates that majority of teachers use English in classrooms for conversation, storytelling, storybook reading, and other reading and writing activities.

## **Section II: Questionnaire on Books**

The questionnaire on books investigated the quality and types of books available to preschool children. From a total of 28 teachers, 23 (82.14%) responded while 5 (17.86%) teachers did not respond to the questionnaire.

### a) Demographic Factors

Analysis of the demographic data revealed that the responses on the questionnaire varied considerably, for example, the teachers reported that the number of books available to preschoolers ranged from 6 to 150. From a total of 23 teachers 15 teachers responded to the question on percentage of books available in different languages (such as English, Kannada and Hindi). Their responses revealed that majority (60% to 90%) of books available to preschoolers were in English, followed by books in Kannada (which is the native language of the participants), followed by books in Hindi (which is the national language). Also, 43.47% of teachers indicated that they develop their own reading material (such as story books/charts) to suit the individual needs of children in their school.

### b) Emergent Literacy-related Factors

Besides the demographic data, the questionnaire on books consisted of 25 questions which elicited responses regarding the quality and types of books available to preschool children in schools. The data from the QB was subjected to descriptive statistics (Refer Table 5) and the results revealed that the mean for Genre of Books (GB), Child-friendly Books (CFB), Quality of Books (QB) and Quality of Illustrations (QI) was above 4 (above 80%), while only for Types of Books (TB), the mean was 1.96 (39.2%). The mean for the total score was 19.39 (77.56%), which indicates that although preschool children in the sample were not exposed to different types of books such as board books, cloth books and CD ROMs they were exposed to good quality books with appropriate text and illustrations.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics: Questionnaire on Books (N=23)

Emergent Literacy Experiences with Books	Mean	Range		Standard Deviation
		Minimum	Maximum	
Genre of Books (GB)	4.52	3	5	0.67
Child-friendly Books (CFB)	4.39	2	5	1.08
Quality of Books (QB)	4.26	1	5	0.96
Quality of Illustrations (QI)	4.26	3	5	0.75
Types of Books (TB)	1.96	0	5	1.66
Total Score	19.39	13	25	3.35

For further analysis, the total score received by teachers on the questionnaire (maximum score = 25) was grouped into five levels: 0-5 (0-20%), 6-10 (20-40%), 11-15 (40-60%), 16-20 (60-80%) and 21-25 (80-100%). Since the total numbers of questions were 5 and the maximum score was 25, the scores were divided into five equal levels. Response from 23 teachers indicated that 47.83% of teachers scored 21-25 (80-100%), 30.43% of teachers scored 16-20 (60-80%), 21.74% of teachers scored 11-15 (40-60%) while none of the teachers scored below 40% (Refer

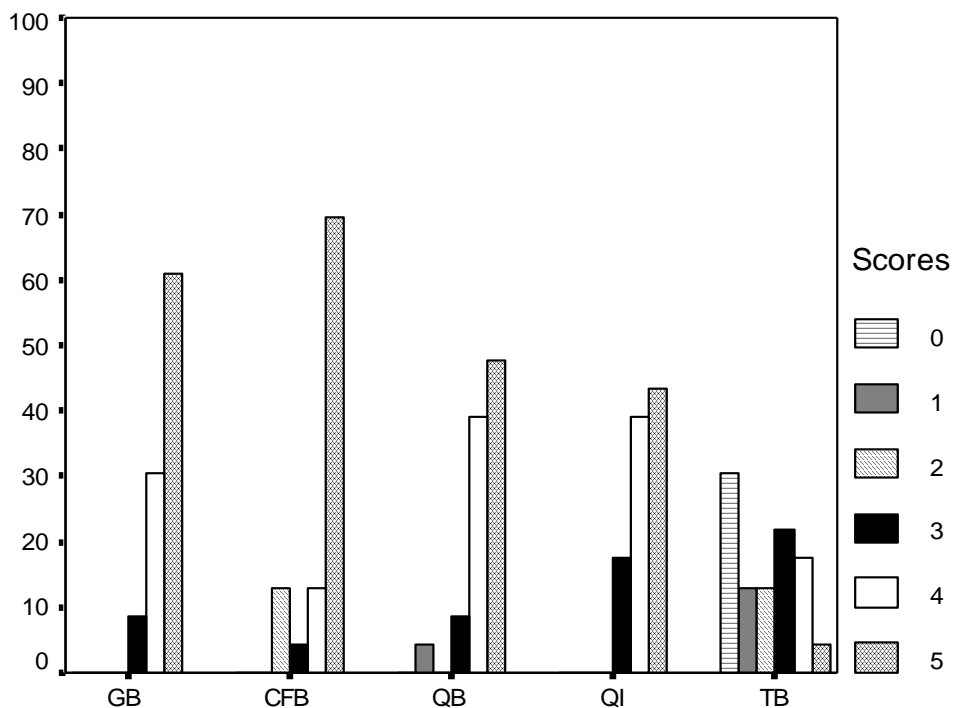
Table 6). Considering scores greater than 80% as good scores, it was evident that 47.83% of teachers in the sample received good scores, which indicates that 47.83% of the preschools in the sample provided good quality, child friendly books with appropriate text and illustrations.

Table 6: Teachers' scores on the Questionnaire on Books

Teachers' Scores	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
Teachers who scored 80-100%	11	47.83%
Teachers who scored 60-80%	7	30.43%
Teachers who scored 40-60%	5	21.74%
Teachers who scored 20-40%	0	0
Teachers who scored 0-20%	0	0
Total	23	100%

### Emergent Literacy Experiences with Books

The Questionnaire on Books consisted of questions that were grouped under five categories: Genre of Books (GB), Child-friendly Books (CFB), Quality of Books (QB), Quality of Illustrations (QI) and Types of Books (TB). Each category had 5 questions and each question scored '0' or '1' based on the responses. Thus, each category received a score from 0 to 5 based on the number of responses that scored '1'.



Emergent Literacy Experiences with Books

Figure 4: Emergent literacy experiences with books

GB: Genre of Books, CFB: Child-friendly Books, QB: Quality of Books, QI: Quality of Illustrations, TB: Types of Books.

Figure 4 illustrates the teachers' scores from '0' to '5' on the five categories of emergent literacy experiences with books (X-axis). The Y-axis shows the percentage of teachers who scored from '0' to '5' on each category. For example, 60.9% of teachers received a score of '5' (100% score), 30.4% of teachers received a score of '4' (80% score) and 8.7% of teachers received a score of '3' (60% score) in response to the questions on 'GB- Genre of Books' (Refer Table 7). None of the teachers scored below 60% on questions under "GB- Genre of Books".

Table 7: Emergent literacy experiences with books

Score	Number (Percentage) of Teachers				
	Genre of Books	Child-friendly Books	Quality of Books	Quality of Illustrations	Types of Books
0 (0%)	0	0	0	0	7 (30.4%)
1 (20%)	0	0	0	0	3 (13%)
2 (40%)	0	3 (13%)	1 (4.3%)	0	3 (13%)
3 (60%)	2 (8.7%)	1 (4.3%)	2 (8.7%)	4 (17.4%)	5 (21.7%)
4 (80%)	7 (30.4%)	3 (13%)	9 (39.1%)	9 (39.1%)	4 (17.4%)
5 (100%)	14 (60.9%)	16 (69.6%)	11 (47.8%)	10 (43.5%)	1 (4.3%)
Total	115 (100%)	115 (100%)	115 (100%)	115 (100%)	115 (100%)

1) Genre of Books (GB)

Results indicate that 60.9% of responses received a score of '5' (100% score), 30.4% of responses received a score of 4 (80% score) and only 2% responses received a score of 3 (60% score). Thus, 91.1% of teachers received a score greater than 80%. This indicates that majority of schools provide different genres of books such as storybooks and books for teaching concepts like alphabet, numbers, colours, shapes etc.

## 2) Child-friendly Books (CFB)

Results indicate that 69.6% of responses received a score of '5' (100% score), 13% of responses received a score of 4 (80% score), 4.3% of responses received a score of 3 (60% score) and 13% responses received a score of 2 (40% score). Thus, 82.6% of teachers received a score greater than 80%. This indicates that majority of schools provide child-friendly books to preschool children.

## 3) Quality of Books (QB)

Results indicate that 47.8% of responses received a score of '5' (100% score), 39.1% of responses received a score of 4 (80% score), 8.7% of responses received a score of 3 (60% score) and 4.3% of responses received a score of 2 (40% score). Thus, 86.9% of teachers received a score greater than 80%. This indicates that majority of schools provide books that are graded according to the theme, size of print, vocabulary, amount of text and complexity of text.

## 4) Quality of Illustrations (QI)

Results indicate that 43.5% of responses received a score of '5' (100% score), 39.1% of responses received a score of 4 (80% score) and 17.4% of responses received a score of 3 (60% score). Thus, 84.6% of teachers received a score greater than 80%. This indicates that majority of schools provide books that have colourful and attractive illustrations, which are appropriate to the socio-cultural context of preschool children in the sample.

## 5) Types of Books (TB)

Results indicate that 4.3% of responses received a score of '5' (100% score), 17.4% of responses received a score of 4 (80% score), 21.7% of responses received a score of 3 (60% score), 13% responses received a score of 2 (40% score) and 13% of responses received a score of 1 (20% score). Thus, only 21.7% of teachers received a score greater than 80%. This indicates that majority of schools were unable to provide different types of books like board books, cloth books, touch-and-feel books, interactive books, and electronic books (CD-ROM).

## Discussion

In a multicultural and multilingual country like India, where children are exposed to diverse literacy environments, hardly any research has been carried out to study the nature of these environments and their effect on the literacy development in preschool children. The present

study explored the emergent literacy experiences of preschoolers in the classroom environment via the questionnaire method. Preschool teachers participated in the survey and the study yielded several important findings. Firstly, majority of preschools in the sample provided children with literacy rich experiences through activities that facilitated emergent literacy skills such as oral language, print knowledge and phonological awareness. Secondly, majority of preschools in the sample provided good quality and child friendly books with appropriate text and illustrations.

These findings are novel in a developing country like India but they are consistent with research conducted with preschoolers in developed countries. There is hardly any research data available on the emergent literacy experiences of children from preschools in India. So, these findings are encouraging for parents, educators and speech language pathologists who are concerned about the emergent literacy experiences of children in Indian preschools. Although it must be stressed at this stage that the results of the present study are applicable to Kannada-speaking preschoolers from the urban areas of Mysore city and should not be generalized to children from other linguistic or literacy backgrounds. In the following section, the results will be discussed in two parts: questionnaire for teachers and questionnaire on books.

### **Questionnaire for Teachers**

The results of the demographic data reveal that that majority of teachers were qualified with a Bachelor's degree or higher; they had undergone teachers' training and had over 5 years of teaching experience. This shows that majority of preschools in the sample had employed teachers with good credentials which would facilitate literacy outcomes in children. The studies carried out by Barnett (2004), and Abt-Perkins and Rosen (2000) show that teachers who were qualified with a bachelor's degree facilitated better literacy outcomes. The results also show that majority of teachers used English most of the time for conversation and for reading and writing activities. This indicates that the preschoolers are provided with ample opportunities to learn English, which is the medium of instruction.

Research review suggests that reading aloud to children facilitates development in four areas that are important to formal reading instruction: oral language, cognitive skills, concept about print and phonemic awareness (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985); Hall & Moats, 1999; Holdaway, 1979).

Results of the present study reveal that majority of teachers carried out activities such as storybook reading to facilitate oral language and print awareness skills. It was interesting to note that teachers in the present study read storybooks to children in classrooms but did not send storybooks for them to read at home.

One possible explanation for this could be the fact that majority of preschools have limited books in the library hence their circulation is limited. Secondly, if parents do not supervise children at home they might damage schoolbooks, which might prevent teachers from sending library books home. Khurana and Rao (2008) reported that majority of parents read storybooks to their children, taught them book-handling skills, pointed to words while reading and encouraged

children to ask questions while reading. This indicates that the children in the sample were exposed to shared storybook reading experiences both at home and in the school environment.

Letter knowledge, which provides the basis for forming connections between the letters in spellings and the sounds in pronunciations, has been identified as a strong predictor of reading success (Badian, 1995; Ehri & Sweet, 1991). Results on letter knowledge indicate that majority of teachers taught the letters of the alphabet, explained the difference between letter names and sounds, and encouraged children to write small words such as their names. According to Khurana and Rao (2008), parents help children to identify letter names/sounds and encourage them to write small words, which scaffold the concepts of letter knowledge that children acquire in the classroom.

Phonological awareness is an essential skill for learning to read (Torgesen, Wagner & Rashotte, 1994). Research shows that children who come to formal instruction with underdeveloped phonological awareness face great challenges keeping up with early reading instruction (Torgesen, Wagner & Rashotte, 1994). Thus, it is important for preschool teachers to include activities that facilitate phonological awareness in children. Results of the present study show that teachers in the sample created an awareness of rhymes, syllables and phonemes by explaining that words can be broken down into sound parts (syllables) or sounds (phonemes) and some words have the same beginning or ending sounds. Hence, the teachers in the sample created phonological awareness in preschoolers, which would facilitate their reading skills in later years.

Children understand the purpose of print when they realize that words convey a message; they understand the function of print when they realize that messages can serve multiple purposes (van Kleeck, 1990). Khurana and Rao (2008) reported that majority of preschoolers in their sample were exposed to environmental print in the form of newspapers, magazines, logos and company names on products used at home. They reported that since the parents in the sample had good educational background, children were likely to be exposed to print in their environment. Results of the present study indicate that majority of teachers encouraged children to identify important signs such as TOILET, STOP, IN and OUT, which indicates that the children in the sample were exposed to print knowledge skills both at home and in school.

Research shows that storybook reading is more effective if it is carried out in an interactive manner, where parents read with feelings and expressions, ask questions, and encourage children to retell stories or complete sentences for them (Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan et al., 1988). In the present study majority of teachers encourage children to talk about their daily experiences and use complete sentences. This is supported by the study by Khurana and Rao (2008) who report that majority of parents taught new words, encouraged children to use complete sentences, have detailed conversations and encouraged them to talk about their everyday experiences. This indicates that the children in the sample had adequate opportunities to develop good oral language skills both at home and in the school environment.



The study by Khurana & Rao (2008) reports that parents of preschool children preferred the native language (Kannada) for storytelling and everyday conversation, and English for storybook reading, and other reading and writing activities. It is evident that children's exposure to English in the home environment was restricted to activities that focussed on reading and writing. The present study reveals that in the preschool environment children are exposed to English majority of time, both for oral language activities as well as reading and writing activities. Since these children are acquiring literacy in the English language, it is essential that their knowledge of English language is strengthened.

Hence, the results indicate that preschool children in the sample have a fair chance of acquiring adequate emergent literacy skills since their home and school environment provide literacy rich experiences in the form of oral language, print awareness, letter knowledge and phonological awareness.

### **Questionnaire on Books**

The demographic data from the questionnaire on books indicated that the number of books available to preschool children varied considerably. This diversity could be due to the lack of a standardized curriculum for preschools in India (standard curriculum is available for children studying in first grade and above). Hence, each preschool had its own curriculum which determined the number and type of books available to children. Also, majority of the preschools in India are run by private organizations, so the number of books present in preschools depends upon the availability of funds.

The results also indicated that majority of books in the preschools were in English, followed by Kannada and Hindi (in that order). This might be due to the fact that the medium of instruction in these schools was English therefore they acquired maximum books in English. The presence of books in other languages such as Kannada and Hindi indicated that preschoolers were exposed to a multilingual literacy experience. Although these schools had English as the medium of instruction, preschoolers were exposed to reading and writing the basic syllables of the native language (Kannada) by the time they reached upper kindergarten. It's amazing that these children acquired the written form of the second language (English, in which they have not achieved oral proficiency) before they acquired the written form of their native language (Kannada). Hence, it is evident that literacy emerges in unique circumstances in the present group of preschoolers.

The teachers in the sample were motivated and took initiative to improve the literacy experiences of preschool children. This is evident from the fact that majority of teachers responded to the questionnaire. Also, nearly half of the teachers reported that they developed learning aids such as picture charts and storybooks to make their classroom teaching more effective. Since the participant group is bilingual, the teachers report that they frequently use the native language to explain concepts and clarify word meanings. This shows that the teachers are sensitive to the needs of bilingual children and make necessary accommodations, which facilitate meaningful literacy acquisition.

Another important finding of the present study was that preschoolers in the sample were exposed to books with good quality text and illustrations, which were developmentally appropriate. Ezell & Justice (2005) suggest that factors such as the complexity of text and quality of illustrations play an important role because a book that is too advanced would be counterproductive and the material will not be understood by preschoolers. When that occurs children might lose interest and may terminate the reading session prematurely. Since preschool children have short attention spans, the amount of text is an important consideration while choosing a book (Ezell & Justice, 2005). Books for preschool children should have simple, easy to comprehend sentences. Compound sentences, which have too many clauses, might be too demanding for preschool children.

Research review suggests that it is important to ensure that children are exposed to various genres of books like storybooks which describe a fantasy or adventure, concept books that teach numbers, alphabets, colours, rhymes and books with familiar experiences that a child can relate to (Ezell & Justice, 2005). Results of the present study indicate that children were exposed to books from different genres such as concept books and storybooks, in their classroom.

The study by Khurana and Rao (2008) found that preschool children were exposed to various genres of books in the home environment too. This indicates that preschoolers were exposed to different genre of books both in the home and the school environment. Another important finding of the present study is that although preschoolers were exposed to different genres of books they were not exposed to different types of books such as cloth books, board books, touch and feel books, interactive books and CD-ROMs. The reason behind this finding could be the lack of sufficient funds (since these books are relatively more expensive than regular books) and the lack of awareness amongst the preschool teachers. Since the education system in India is traditional in many ways, majority of schools use regular books to teach children.

Majority of the findings from the present study are encouraging because it is evident that besides the limited resources, the teachers are making an effort to provide rich literacy experiences to preschool children. It is very difficult to predict at this stage whether these factors will have any effect on the literacy outcomes of the participants in the present study. Since the present study is a part of the doctoral research titled 'Development of Emergent Literacy in Kannada-speaking English Language Learners' the findings of this paper will be correlated with the results of the larger study, which would give us an insight on how literacy emerges in bilingual preschoolers from India.

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## Appendix A

### Questionnaire for Teachers

Teacher's name.....Age/sex.....Date.....  
 Educational qualification.....  
 Number of years of teaching experience.....  
 Are you trained in Pre-Primary teaching? If yes, name the training institute.....  
 How many languages do you use in the classroom? (Please specify the languages)  
 .....  
 How many children do you have in each class? .....  
 What is the age range of children in your class? .....

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 3 March 2011

Sarika Khurana, Ph.D. Candidate and Prema K. S. Rao, Ph.D.

Emergent Literacy Experiences in the Classroom - A Sample Survey in Mysore City

Do you screen children for problems in: a) Hearing and speech? .....  
b) Reading and writing? .....

School's name and address.....

Email:

Website:

Medium of Instruction.....

1. Do you teach book handling skills in your classroom, like:
  - a. A book has a front and a back cover?  
 Yes  No
  - b. A book is held right side up?  
 Yes  No
  - c. Pages are turned one at a time to follow a story?  
 Yes  No
  - d. A book is read from left to right?  
 Yes  No
  
2. Do you :
  - a. Read storybooks to your students?  
 Yes  No
  - b. Encourage children to retell the story in their own words?  
 Yes  No
  - c. Send home books (from the library) that children can read themselves?  
 Yes  No
  - d. Send home books and encourage parents to read to their children?  
 Yes  No
  
3. Do you teach children:
  - a. That each letter has a name and a sound, e.g. 'M' is called 'em' but it says the sound, 'mmmm'?  
 Yes  No
  - b. Written forms of letters of the alphabet?  
 Yes  No
  - c. To write words, like their name?  
 Yes  No
  - d. To match sounds to letter names e.g. the sound /shshsh/ is written as 'sh' (like in 'Ship')?  
 Yes  No
  
4. Do you teach children that:
  - a. Words can be broken down into sound parts (syllables) e.g. 'tomato' has three sound parts, /to/, /ma/ and /to/?  
 Yes  No
  - b. A word can be broken into sounds e.g. 'fan' can be broken into /fff/, /aaa/, /nnn/?



- Yes  No
- c. Some words have the same ending sound/s (e.g. mat, bat, cat)?  
 Yes  No
- d. Some words have the same beginning sound (e.g. bat, big, ball)  
 Yes  No
5. Do you encourage children to:
- a. Learn important signs by symbolic reading? e.g. Toilet sign  
 Yes  No
- b. Learn important signs by sight reading? e.g. Stop sign  
 Yes  No
- c. Encourage children to express themselves using complete sentences?  
 Yes  No
- d. Encourage children to talk about their experiences, e.g. “what happened in the playground?”  
 Yes  No
6. Do you encourage children to:
- a. Read words by naming the letters in the word e.g. ‘aar’, ‘a’, ‘em’ makes ‘Ram’?  
 Yes  No
- b. Read words by decoding the sounds in the word e.g. /rrr/, /aaa/, /mmm/ makes ‘Ram’?  
 Yes  No
- c. Point at words when you are reading, by moving his/her finger under the print?  
 Yes  No
- d. Match spoken word to the written word?  
 Yes  No
7. Specify the approximate percentage of time you use English/Kannada (native language) with your students:
- a. Daily conversation?  
English .....%                      Kannada ..... %
- b. Storytelling?  
English .....%                      Kannada ..... %
- c. Reading storybooks?  
English .....%                      Kannada ..... %
- d. Other reading and writing activities?  
English .....%                      Kannada ..... %




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## Appendix B

### Questionnaire on Books

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

11 : 3 March 2011

Sarika Khurana, Ph.D. Candidate and Prema K. S. Rao, Ph.D.

Emergent Literacy Experiences in the Classroom - A Sample Survey in Mysore City

Name:

Age/Sex:

Date:

Profession /Designation:

Name of the School:

Address.....

.....

Phone:

E-mail:

Website:

Total number of books available in your organization for children up to six years.....

Does your organization develop reading material (like storybooks)? If yes, please specify the type/s of material developed.....

Does your organization have books in different languages? (Please specify the percentage of books you have in each language) .....

1) Does your organization have the following?

a) Books for teaching rhymes?

Yes No

b) Books for teaching concepts like alphabet, numbers, colours, shapes, opposites etc.?

Yes No

c) Books with informational text like types of fruits, vegetables, transportation etc.?

Yes No

d) Storybooks which describe a fantasy or an adventure?

Yes No

e) Storybooks about familiar experiences, which a child can relate to. E.g. sharing with siblings and friends?

Yes No

2) Are these books:

a) Attractive and interesting for young children?

Yes No

b) Easy to handle, in terms of size and weight?

Yes No

c) Laminated (so that they can be wiped clean)?

Yes No

d) Durable (doesn't wear and tear easily)?

Yes No


e) Free of hazards like sharp edges and toxic printing material?

Yes No

3) Are these books graded according to:

a) Theme or topic (younger children will loose interest if the topic of the book is too advanced)?

Yes No

- b) Size of print (larger print is easier for younger children to read)?  
Yes                      No
- b) Vocabulary level (children gain from reading if they understand at least 90% of the words)?  
Yes                      No
- c) Amount of text (books with just one word per page or three to four words per page for younger children and books with two or three sentences per page for older children)?  
Yes                      No
- e) Complexity of text (whether books use simple sentences which children can understand easily)?  
Yes                      No
- 4) Are the illustrations (pictures) in the book:
- a) Colourful and attractive?  
Yes                      No
- b) Descriptive of the text (do the pictures depict what the text says e.g. 'big scary monster')?  
Yes                      No
- c) Abstract and difficult to interpret?  
Yes                      No
- d) Incorporating text, in the form of labels or speech bubbles e.g.   
Yes                      No
- e) Appropriate to socio-cultural aspects?  
Yes                      No
- 5) Does your organization have:
- a) Board books, which are made from heavy cardboard with a plastic coating?  
Yes                      No
- b) Cloth books, which are soft, strong and washable (books that are printed on cloth)?  
Yes                      No
- c) Touch and feel books (they contain pictures with different textures, pages of different shapes or holes)?  
Yes                      No
- d) Interactive books, which can be manipulated (they have flaps or other parts that move)?  
Yes                      No
- e) Electronic books (CD-ROM) which children can read on a computer?  
Yes                      No

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11 : 3 March 2011

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